

From: applications.administrator@capitol.local
To: [Senate Redistricting](#)
Subject: INETMAIL: Redistricting Public Input
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Attachments: [Redistricting Testimony.pdf](#)

Date: 2021-09-25
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Affirm public info: I agree

Regarding: ALL

[REDACTED]

Good morning, Madame Chairwoman, Senators, and all those in attendance,

Thank you for giving the public a chance to provide testimony on this redistricting process. This is an integral aspect of our democracy, and we ALL need to be involved.

My name is Nimra Shahzad and I am a CHIP intern at Emgage Texas, a non-profit community organization that seeks to educate, mobilize, and empower American Muslims. I am an Asian American. I am also a senior at the University of Houston. I live in Fort Bend County in Texas Senate District 18.

I am testifying in response to SB4. Texas has 31 Senate Districts and I firmly believe that the main goal of SB4 is not creating competitive and opportunity districts, but rather to protect incumbents. Virtually all 31 of these proposed districts are “safe”. Each district already comes with a predicted winner. This is the exact opposite of how our representative democracy is supposed to function. Voters must pick their representatives not the other way around. This redistricting process is corrupt, and Texans deserve a fair and open election process. It is part of your job to provide that to them.

One proposed district in particular is raising a lot of concerns. That is proposed district 17. This district includes the counties of Colorado, Wharton, Matagorda, Brazoria, Jackson and some of Fort Bend, Harris, and Waller. However, it seems as if district 17 is methodically cutting out certain areas of Fort Bend, Harris, and Waller. The district as a whole is not a “reasonable” shape. The areas where district 17 meets district 7 is clearly drawn with the agenda of diluting the voting power of minorities. When representatives cut out the districts to their liking and leave little to no regard of the district’s communities of interest, democracy requires that we sound the alarm. This is a clear attempt to take the voting power away from the citizens. Racial gerrymandering chips away and undermines our representative democracy.

When it comes to the national level, Texas is receiving 2 new seats in Congress due to its population growth. My county is one of the fastest growing counties in the country. I believe that the Fort Bend area should receive a new district. One of the main drivers of this population growth is the Asian American and Pacific Islander community. According to newly released Census data, Fort Bend County is now is approximately 20% AAPI. Overall, about 68% of the

county population is persons of color. The AAPI community is a community of interest that should be preserved. For too long, our voting power has been diluted and belittled.

It is known that Texas is one of the most gerrymandered states in the country. Instead of having our maps redrawn behind closed doors, I hope this committee would commit to considering maps submitted by the community and community organizations. If this committee rejects any maps, then this committee should provide explanations for why it rejected the suggestions made by the community.

Moreover, I ask that this committee provide analysis of how its final maps impact AAPI communities and whether our voices are heard. Are we underrepresented? How much in comparison to others? I urge this committee to conduct redistricting transparently and accessibly by taking the following actions:

- I ask that you provide more opportunities for Texans to testify in-person. The public testifying days should be at appropriate times like weekends and evenings.
- Texans should be made aware of these testifying days at least 10 days before. If a testifying day has to be cancelled for any reason, a make-up day must be scheduled.
- I also ask that the committee continue to provide access to virtual testimony to allow Texans who cannot make a trip to Austin to participate in this redistricting process.

Redistricting affects my community and every community across Texas for the upcoming ten years, at least. It is time to abandon racial gerrymandering and create maps that protect and preserve our communities of interest. The AAPI population has increased in Fort Bend and we deserve fair representation due to the hard work and experience we bring to that county. Keep Fort Bend County and its unique cultural and language communities together as much as possible and make the redistricting process transparent and accessible so that we the people can have trust in the process.

Thank you.