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Public Hearing Testimony
Illinois House Redistricting Committee
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Madam Chair and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Steven Monroy, and I am a staff attorney with the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund. MALDEF is a national civil rights law firm. For over 50 years, MALDEF has worked to protect the voting rights of Latinos through community education, advocacy and litigation. Our organization has been involved in Illinois redistricting since the 1980s. We regularly partnered with stakeholders representing diverse communities, developed model maps, and monitored the state's compliance with minority voting rights, particularly the federal Voting Rights Act.

In 2021, Latino participation is more critical than ever before. Latinos are about 17.5% of the state's total population and about 15% of the state's voting age population. Latinos are the fastest growing minority group in Illinois but redistricting historically has not reflected the growing Latino population. The Voting Rights Act requires that African American, Asian, and Latino voters have an equal opportunity to elect their candidates of choice. States must draw **majority-minority districts at percentages that translate to effective political power** because not all residents can vote. Districts should be drawn with **voting age population** and with consideration for the fact that Latino voting power is **lower** than the voting age population may suggest because the Latino community has larger numbers of noncitizens.

This redistricting cycle poses unprecedented challenges to community engagement in the redistricting process. In order for members of the Latino community to have an effective voice in the process, we offer the following recommendations:

1. That hearings be scheduled at least two weeks in advance and be widely publicized.
2. That the Committee provides at least two weeks between releasing a plan and holding a hearing to consider a plan, so the public can provide meaningful feedback.

The Latino community has historically experienced voting discrimination and attempts to dilute the effectiveness of their votes. Redistricting must take into account the need to overcome the lingering effects of discrimination and offer minority voters an equal opportunity to elect their candidates of choice. New district boundaries should fairly reflect minority voting strength and not seek to minimize or dilute the minority vote.

We expect to testify again before this committee on behalf of Latinos in areas throughout the state.

Thank you for your time.