



# Coalition For A Better Chinese American Community 華埠更好團結聯盟

TESTIMONY SUBMITTED TO THE ILLINOIS HOUSE REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE

April 3, 2021

My name is Grace Chan McKibben and I am the Executive Director of Coalition for a Better Chinese American Community (CBCAC), a policy and advocacy organization based in Chicago's Chinatown, which has led non-partisan civic engagement and issue-based policy initiatives in Chicago's Chinatown area since 1998. This is a statement from the Coalition representing our organization and individual members. The Coalition currently operates as a collective that includes 13 other organizations that serve Chinese Americans in Chinatown and the surrounding neighborhoods of Bridgeport, McKinley Park, Brighton Park, Pilsen, South Loop, and Douglas. In our Census 2020 engagement project, CBCAC led a Census Complete Count Committee with 25 participating organizations.

For many years, the Greater Chinatown community has been divided into numerous legislative districts. Working closely with State Sen. Kwame Raoul and Asian American Institute (which has since been renamed Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Chicago), CBCAC was instrumental in the passage of the Illinois Voting Act of 2011. The legislation protects racial and language minority communities who are too small to be protected by the Federal Voting Right Act. During the ensuing redistricting process, 95% of the Asian Americans living in the Greater Chinatown area were included in the Second Illinois State Representative District, now represented by Representative Theresa Mah.

Although official Census redistricting results will not be released until September 30, 2021 (with a legacy format summary redistricting data file available in mid to late August), the American Community Survey 2019 5-year estimates already show over 30,000 Asian Americans living in Chinatown and surrounding areas. As a growing community with students, parents, and elders in need of culturally and linguistically sensitive social services, fair redistricting is critical to preserving and expanding funding for such programs and services. Chicago's Chinatown is often

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touted as the only growing Chinatown in North America. The growing population is anchored by strong organizations in the neighborhood that provided needed social services, cultural programming, and information and referral to government and private sector resources in the rest of the City and State. The neighborhood also includes a growing labor force of professionals and business owners and an increasingly active voice in civic participation.

With our shared and deeply ingrained belief in participatory democracy, we support an open process with community input, and thus we urge the Committee to develop a thoughtful redistricting process that is open for and accountable to all communities of interest. We applaud the inclusion of in-person meetings now that it is more possible to do so in addition to virtual meetings. We also urge that there are resources provided to bridge linguistic, cultural, and technological barriers, so community voices can be heard, especially from communities that are most marginalized. We thank you for holding this hearing and we urge you to continue to hear from communities about their needs for a voice at the table for redistricting discussions.

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