



Contact:
Steven Monroy
Legislative Staff Attorney
(312) 427-0701; smonroy@maldef.org

Public Hearing Testimony
Illinois House Redistricting Committee
April 12, 2021

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 that works to protect the 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.

We would like to recognize the hard work and dedication of all the organizations, elected officials, and community leaders who completed a historic get-out-the-count campaign for the 2020 census in Illinois. We also thank every resident who self-responded to the census.

We have testified at several hearings of this Committee and the Senate Redistricting Committee on the importance of creating districts that provide Latino community members a **fair opportunity to elect candidates of choice** – as required by the federal Voting Rights Act. The federal Voting Rights Act requires states to draw majority-minority districts that provide specific racial minority or language minority groups the opportunity to elect candidates of choice. The best way to accomplish this is by creating districts with **Latino-majority voting age population**.

We urge this committee to protect existing Latino-majority and plurality districts and, where there are sufficient increases in Latino population, to create new Latino-majority districts.

We expect that the 2020 census results will show an increase in Latino population statewide but particularly in the Chicago area. At present, the 77th House district south of O'Hare and the 83rd House district in Aurora are only suburban districts with a majority Latino-voting age population. We urge the Committee to consider whether other Latino-voting age majority districts can be drawn based on 2020 census results – including in, but not limited to, the Elgin and Waukegan areas. These two existing districts were close to being Latino majority in the 2011 redistricting.

The Illinois Voting Rights Act of 2011 has been broadly discussed in past hearings but we wish to know that law will be implemented and how compliance with the law will be measured. The Illinois Voting Rights Act of 2011 was passed during the last redistricting cycle and it is different from the federal Voting Rights Act. The federal law has comprehensive requirements and a detailed compliance process developed by decades of litigation.

When a minority group is not large enough to comprise a majority-minority district, then the Illinois Voting Rights Act of 2011 requires the state to draw a district that provides the minority group an opportunity to elect candidates of choice together with other groups. We applaud that the state is guided by these goals but the law itself does not contain meaningful standards for analyzing compliance. In order to understand the legislative intent behind proposed maps, we urge the Committee to include a compliance report with all map proposals that details how the maps adhered to the federal Voting Rights Act and the Illinois Voting Rights Act.

As we approach the end of the scheduled hearings, we urge the committee to provide additional opportunities for public participation throughout the rest of redistricting process. We have heard time and again from members of the public that they were not aware of this process or were confused on how to participate.

To conclude, we offer the following recommendations:

1. The final map must account for **voting age population**.
2. That the Committee considers whether Latino-voting age majority House districts can be drawn in Elgin, Waukegan, and other areas depending on the results of the 2020 census.
3. That the Committee publishes a compliance report with all map proposals that details how the maps comply with the federal Voting Rights Act and the Illinois Voting Rights Act.
4. That the Committee provides at least **two weeks** between releasing a plan and holding a hearing to consider the plan or voting on the plan.