

CHANGE Illinois! testimony to the Illinois Senate Redistricting Committee

Presented by Rev. Alexander Sharp, Executive Director of Protestants for the Common Good and member of the CHANGE Illinois! steering committee

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I appear before you today on behalf of *CHANGE Illinois!*, an independent and non-partisan coalition of diverse interests including organizations that represent more than 2 million Illinoisans working for political reform.

The hearings held by Senate and the House redistricting committees prior to the release of proposed maps offered a good opportunity for the public to tell you what they hoped to see a new map.

Today's hearing, of course, is welcome, but the transparency and public participation process is beginning to get much murkier – just a pinhole of light where there should be a spotlight. Unless more information is made available to the public soon and more hearings are scheduled, we believe you will fall short of overseeing a completely transparent redistricting effort with maximum informed public involvement.

In an April 28 letter to every member of the General Assembly, *CHANGE Illinois!* asked you to take the following four steps to demonstrate your commitment to an open process. Let me review briefly.

ONE. We asked that the maps drafted by legislative leaders and presented to lawmakers be posted on a website accessible to the general public. That step was taken Thursday for Senate maps and Friday afternoon for House maps. Where is the congressional map?

TWO. We asked that the maps be accompanied by the same data known to the map-makers and should include the Census demographics, political data of the draft districts and a narrative explanation explaining the selection of the boundaries, including the impact on minorities, communities of interest, municipal and county boundaries and similar characteristics. The Senate drafters made some of that available on Friday, but the information is far short of what the general public needs to understand the impact on the voters in the proposed districts and why some municipalities and counties are divided among districts.

THREE. We said the public should have at least a week to analyze the maps and data in preparation for regional hearings. By holding your first hearing today so soon after release of picture maps, the public has too little time and too little information. More time is needed to provide genuinely useful and thoughtful analysis.

FOUR. We asked for a minimum of four hearing in different regions of the state. Unless more hearings are scheduled and outside of Chicago and Springfield, that will be another missed opportunity for transparency and public participation.

I will conclude by reiterating what *CHANGE Illinois!* stated in testimony before the two maps were released to the public.

If you believe the public should have a role in redistricting, make certain it happens when it counts most, after the maps are drawn.

With more than a week to go before the scheduled May 31 adjournment, you still have time to make this process far more transparent and responsive.

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