

Joint House and Senate Hearing Testimony
Tuesday, May 24, 2011

(Note: Written testimony was asked to be submitted by UCCRO on my behalf as I am currently out of town and unable to testify in person)

Good morning Chairman and Chairwoman, members of the IL House and Senate Redistricting Committees. My name is Yesenia Sanchez, lead community organizer with P.A.S.O.- West Suburban Action Project. I am also a resident of Franklin Park, IL.

P.A.S.O.- West Suburban Action Project is a non-partisan, non-profit community organization that works to engage community members to act through their faith and values to address issues that affect them, their families, and neighbors with the mission to build stronger communities.

P.A.S.O. uses the unique model of community organizing, leadership development, and civic engagement as tools for members to develop the skills to be active, engaged participants in their communities. Some of the issues P.A.S.O. works around are immigrant rights, education and public safety. P.A.S.O. is an institution-based organization that includes Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Shrine, St. Charles Borromeo, St. John Vianney, and St. Simeon parishes as well as Nuestra Voz Youth Council. We serve the West Cook Suburbs including the areas of Stone Park, Maywood, Bellwood, Melrose Park, Northlake and Franklin Park.

First of all, I'd like to thank both the House and Senate Redistricting Committee members for your work during this redistricting process and your leadership ensuring that both chambers individually and collectively held public hearings after the release of draft maps as promised. We look forward to working together to ensure this process continues to be fair and transparent.

We have analyzed both the released House and Senate maps organizationally and along with other partner organizations, including United Congress of Community and Religious Organizations (UCCRO) and the Latino Agenda. We are encouraged to see many of the areas and principles we collectively raised throughout this process are reflected in these maps, including keeping Chinatown and Little Village intact, as well as the new proposed suburban House district that brings together the areas of Franklin Park, Northlake, Melrose Park and Stone Park together. We do also recognize though there are needed changes and improvements to the maps that fully reflect and keep communities of interest together.

In particular, we were disappointed to see the community of Franklin Park was split in the House released map. After careful review of the map, we are clear Franklin Park is divided between two House districts. In particular it is disappointing to see that the Latino community in this area is split into two, particularly cutting out a section of the district between Addison St., Scott St, Fullerton St. and 25th/Rose Ave, which is an area that has a concentrated density of Latino population. In a community with a total population of 18,333, of which the Latino population makes up 43.1% or 7,902 (based on 2010 Census data), dividing the Latino community has a direct impact diluting this communities' collective power to both address issues of importance as well as elect elected officials of their choice.

Furthermore, as we stated in previous testimony it is important to keep the business district, which includes several Latino-owned businesses that have contributed to the economic stability of the area, intact. In the released map the business district along Franklin Park is not included within district 77, rather included in district 78. The released Senate map on the other hand keeps this area and community of interest intact. **We strongly recommend the House map reflect the Senate boundaries for the Franklin Park area, and insure Franklin Park, especially the**

area West of 25th Ave which includes the higher density of Latino population, not be split from district 77.

In addition, collectively we also ask that the General Assembly consider the following:

- Protect existing African-American state house and senate voting rights districts on the west side. Strengthen these districts to ensure there are effective majorities to ensure residents in these areas will be able to elect the candidates of their choice. We have provided maps that demonstrate that it is possible to draw four house and two senate districts at 57 percent African-American each in this area. The proposed map, however, draws districts at 46, 52, 55 and 56 percent in this same area.
- Ensure that existing as well as new Latino state house and senate districts on the north and south sides have effective majorities to ensure residents in these areas will be able to elect the candidates of their choice. In particular, we believe that the percentages of north side districts can be strengthened and that percentages on the south side can be more balanced. We drew three house districts above 65 percent. The proposed map draws districts at 67, 56, 57, and 58 percent in this same area.
- Respect the communities of interest identified by Asian American communities on the north side by keeping them together in two house districts, and one senate district. We believe Asian Americans can and should make up at least a quarter of two House districts and one Senate district, and that Asian American neighborhoods as defined by the people who live there can still be kept intact. The proposed map draws one district at 25 percent, and another at 20 percent Asian in this same area.
- The Latino population in the South Chicago area can make up one-third of a house district. While it would be ideal to keep this population in one House district, in the interest of ensuring African-American districts in this area are protected, we ask that this community be drawn into at least one Senate district.
- The growing Arab-American population in Chicago's southwest suburbs—which has faced many challenges pre-and-post 9-11—should be recognized as a community of interest and kept together in at least one senate district. While the 2010 Census only collects racial data, 2009 American Community Survey data estimates that there are over 8,500 Arab-Americans living in the Bridgeview, Burbank, Palos Hills, Hickory Hills, Palos Hills, Palos Heights, Chicago Ridge, and Worth areas—making up as much as nine percent of the population in some of these municipalities.

I thank the General Assembly, and both Redistricting Committees for your efforts through this process and respecting communities of interest including Little Village and Chinatown, but we believe the map can and should be improved to ensure fair representation for Illinois communities. We also continue to ask this process be transparent throughout.

Sincerely,

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Lead Community Organizer

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