



華人互助會  
CHINESE MUTUAL AID ASSOCIATION

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March 28, 2011

To: Illinois Senate Redistricting Committee  
From: Steve Brunton, Executive Director, Chinese Mutual Aid Association  
Re: Testimony for the Redistricting Hearing.

I represent Chinese Mutual Aid Association (CMAA), a social services agency founded by Southeast Asian refugees in 1981 to serve ethnic Chinese immigrants and refugees. Today, we serve approximately 10,000 people each year with services that include youth and seniors' programs, English and citizenship classes, computer and vocational training classes, health and safety services, help finding jobs and housing, translation and interpretation services, and an immigration legal clinic. Our clientele now includes immigrants and refugees from several Asian countries, Europe, Africa and Latin America. To serve this growing and diverse immigrant and refugee community, we have over 25 languages and dialects spoken by members of our staff.

CMAA is located in the 7<sup>th</sup> Senate District represented by Sen. Heather Steans. Most of the people we serve live in the Chicago neighborhoods of Uptown, Edgewater and Rogers Park, all areas that are mostly within the 7<sup>th</sup> Senate District.

On the contrary, at the level of the Illinois House Districts, we are split between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Districts represented by Rep. Greg Harris and Rep. Harry Osterman. At the City level, we are split between the 46<sup>th</sup> and 48<sup>th</sup> Wards represented by Ald. Helen Shiller and Ald. Mary Ann Smith. At the Congressional level, we are split between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Congressional Districts represented by Congressman Mike Quigley and Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky. It is only at the State Senate level where we do not feel split up, and we strongly hope the committee will retain the relative cohesiveness of the 7<sup>th</sup> Senate District.

Uptown, Edgewater and Rogers Park are such diverse communities; it is difficult to say that one community is more important than others. However, these neighborhoods do have significant immigrant and refugee populations, and I hope that these diverse groups can be kept together in one district as much as possible. CMAA works closely with organizations serving African, Latino and European immigrants and refugees. While language and culture may seem to divide them, their interests more often than not are similar. The Asian and Latino populations are growing in Illinois. Immigrant populations in general are also growing. Without immigrants and refugees, Illinois would see its population shrinking. This is the time to encourage these groups to increase their participation in Illinois' political life. I hope this redistricting process can be part of that increased participation.

On another note, there are certain populations that are traditionally undercounted by the Census. Even though our community and other communities did a great job of outreach during the Census process, I fear that immigrants and refugees may still not be counted as fully as other populations. The homeless are another population that is traditionally undercounted. If you walk the streets surrounding CMAA's Uptown offices, you notice two things. One is that you are in a thriving community of Chinese and Southeast Asian immigrants and refugees. The second is that there are lots of homeless people on the streets. This is probably because of the high number of single resident occupancy (SRO) buildings in the neighborhood. With an unusual confluence of two historically undercounted communities in one place, I hope the committee will remember these potentially undercounted populations when making its final decisions.

Thank you for your consideration.