

Transcript of the Testimony of:

Meeting

April 05, 2021

SENATE REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE



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Meeting 04/05/2021

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STATE OF ILLINOIS
SENATE REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE
SOUTH COOK COUNTY

Monday, April 5, 2021
5:00 p.m.

State House
Springfield, Illinois
via Zoom videoconference

1 PRESENT via Zoom videoconference:
2 ILLINOIS REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE:
3 SENATOR NAPOLEON HARRIS, III, Chair
4 SENATOR MICHAEL E. HASTINGS, Vice Chair
5 SENATOR JOHN CURRAN, Minority Spokesperson
6 SENATOR STEVEN M. LANDEK, Member
7 SENATOR JASON PLUMMER, Member
8 SENATOR ELGIE R. SIMS, JR., Member
9
10 WITNESSES:
11 MS. DEENA HABBAL
12 Illinois Muslim Civic Coalition
13 MS. NAREMAN TAHA
14 Arab American Family Services (AAFS)
15 MS. ITEDAL SHALABI
16 Arab American Family Services (AAFS)
17 MS. LEENA TLEIB
18 Zakat Foundation of America
19 MR. YUSUF VIDAL
20 Illinois Muslim Civic Coalition
21 BRIAN BURIAN, Staff
22 JOSHUA HORELED, Staff
23 GIOVANNI RANDAZZO, Clerk
24 JOSHUA HORELED, Staff
 BRIAN WINDISCH, LIS
 MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

1 CHAIR SENATOR HARRIS: The meeting of the
2 Senate Redistricting Committee is called to order.

3 Will the clerk please take the roll.

4 THE CLERK: Senator Plummer?

5 SENATOR PLUMMER: Here.

6 THE CLERK: Senator Curran?

7 SPOKESPERSON CURRAN: Here.

8 THE CLERK: Senator Sims?

9 SENATOR SIMS: Present.

10 THE CLERK: Senator Landek?

11 SENATOR LANDEK: Here.

12 THE CLERK: Senator Hastings?

13 SENATOR HASTINGS: Here.

14 THE CLERK: Chair Harris?

15 CHAIR SENATOR HARRIS: Present.

16 Seeing that we have six members
17 present we have established a quorum. The following
18 entities would like to seek leave to photograph the
19 video and proceedings of blue room screen. Is there
20 leave?

21 (No verbal response.)

22 CHAIR SENATOR HARRIS: Leave being granted
23 Senator -- leave is granted. Senator Harris -- I mean
24 Senator Hastings for a motion.

1 SENATOR HASTINGS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

2 I move that this hearing be
3 transcribed by the court reporter so that the
4 committee have a full transcript of this hearing which
5 the Redistricting Committee can approve at a future
6 hearing once members and staff have had an opportunity
7 to review the transcript, make any needed corrections.

8 CHAIR SENATOR HARRIS: Thank you,
9 Senator Hastings.

10 Senator Hastings makes a move to
11 allow for a court reporter to transcribe the hearing.
12 Is there leave?

13 (No verbal response.)

14 CHAIR SENATOR HARRIS: Leave being granted the
15 court reporter will be allowed to transcribe the
16 hearing.

17 The subcommittee is in no receipt of
18 any red ink only testimony. So any red ink testimony
19 that we get these documents along with any other
20 testimony received by the committee will be made part
21 of the committee record and posted on the
22 Redistricting Committee's ILGA website.

23 The subcommittee covers the Southern
24 Cook County, which includes townships of Berwyn,

1 Bloom, Bremen, Cicero, Frankfort, Homer, Lyons,
2 New Lennox, Orland, Rich and Thornton.

3 I will start with the opening
4 statement and I know that Vice Chairman Hastings has
5 some comments as well and if Senator -- if
6 Senator Curran has any opening remarks, we can go from
7 there and then after that we turn to testimony.

8 So I'll start by saying good evening.
9 Welcome to the South Cook County Redistricting
10 Committee. This is the latest of a series of regional
11 hearings the Senate Redistricting Committee is holding
12 to gather input from the communities of interest
13 across Illinois as we work to create a fair map that
14 reflects the diversity of our state.

15 It is the constitutional duty of the
16 legislators to undergo this process every ten years to
17 make sure that our communities receive fair and equal
18 representation. We know that our communities are very
19 different from what they were a decade ago. So it's
20 important that we take time to understand those
21 changes.

22 For those unable to join us today I
23 encourage you to visit our website at
24 www.ilsenateredistricting.com where you can submit

1 comments and concerns and find more detailed
2 information about the redistricting process.

3 We are focused and encouraging as
4 many public participations as possible. In the site
5 you can even draft and submit your own proposed
6 legislative boundary maps which will be reviewed as
7 part of the public record.

8 This year presents new challenges
9 including the delay in data from the U.S. Census
10 Bureau. Unfortunately, the data may not be available
11 until late August or September, way past our June 30th
12 constitutional deadline to complete this process.

13 If we fail to meet this deadline, map
14 making would be turned over to a committee of
15 political insiders. History has shown us that these
16 results in most political outcomes possible is not
17 what we want. We don't want power brokers
18 overshadowing the needs of the people. That will be a
19 disservice to the people of Illinois.

20 To correct a fair map we need more
21 input and more people involved in the process than
22 ever. We want to hear from you and your
23 constituencies and communities of interest that there
24 will be a fair and representative map of the general

1 assembly.

2 I appreciate those who took the time
3 to be with us today and I look forward to hearing from
4 you. Thank you and now I'll turn it over to
5 Senator Hastings for remarks.

6 SENATOR HASTINGS: Thank you, Chairman Harris,
7 and Senator Landek, Senator Curran, Senator Plummer,
8 thank you. It's always good to be with our colleagues
9 and -- and most of all thank you to those that are
10 going to participate with us today to share their
11 perspective.

12 Senator Harris, you're right. We
13 can't abandon our constitutional duty, especially if
14 doing so would mean fewer people have a say in this
15 process.

16 We can't control the timeline for
17 when census data is released, but we can do our best
18 to make sure that we meet our constitutional deadline
19 and craft a fair map and to do so in a way that
20 encourages public participation.

21 We know how important it is that
22 every person in our state is counted, but census data
23 only paints part of the picture. Despite the efforts
24 of groups across the state to ensure strong turnout in

1 the middle of a pandemic we know that the data will
2 not be perfect, especially when it comes to how to
3 count communities including those who are low income,
4 racial and ethnic minorities, renters, the homeless,
5 LGBTQ and (inaudible).

6 It only underscores why it is so
7 important that we're here today as to hear from our
8 communities. I look forward to listening and, most
9 importantly, I look forward to learning. I want to
10 say thank you again to everybody for participating
11 today and working this process.

12 MR. WINDISCH: Mr. Chairman, you're muted. I'm
13 not sure if you're returning to the meeting or not.

14 CHAIR SENATOR HARRIS: Yes.

15 Thank you, Senator Hastings, for your
16 comments.

17 Senator Curran, would you like to
18 proceed with opening comments?

19 SPOKESPERSON SENATOR CURRAN: Very briefly,
20 Mr. Chair. I would just like to point out that the
21 Senate Republicans have put forward the People's
22 Independent Map Act, Senate Bill 1325, which is -- the
23 Republicans have put forth to put the citizens in
24 complete control of the redistricting process. You

1 could turn to Senate Bill 1325 for more details on
2 that.

3 And then, Mr. Chairman, I would also
4 like to point out on the website that one individual
5 submitted written testimony, a Robert Straz,
6 S-T-R-A-Z, from the city of Palos Heights. So just to
7 point that out for the record. Thank you,
8 Mr. Chairman.

9 CHAIR SENATOR HARRIS: All right. Thank you,
10 Senator Curran.

11 So thanks -- for our witnesses we
12 want to please start by stating your name, your
13 organization and clearly for the record.

14 Our first witnesses are
15 representatives from the Illinois Muslim Civic
16 Coalition, Deena Habbal, Shadin Maali, Lena Tleib and
17 Yusaf Vidal. I understand your testimony will start
18 with Deena and then we'll be -- we'll recognize the
19 other witnesses.

20 Please proceed, Deena.

21 MS. HABBAL: Hi. Thank you very much for
22 having me here today. I'm going to share my screen if
23 that's okay. I guess I already shared it so there you
24 go.

1 My name is Deena Habbal, and that's
2 D-E-E-N-A, last name is H-A-B-B-A-L, and I'm with the
3 Illinois Muslim Civic Coalition, and we are a
4 coalition of over 150 partners and allies of all
5 races, ethnicities, classes, faiths and backgrounds.

6 Our focus is ensuring policies that
7 are made for us are made with us, and redistricting is
8 one critical piece of this, and we appreciate CHANGE
9 Illinois and Asian Americans Advancing Justice and
10 other partner organizations for letting us know about
11 these meetings.

12 The Coalition recommends that
13 legislators make the census -- make sure census data
14 supports redistricting and that the process is
15 transparent, inclusive and clear.

16 In Illinois we have communities that
17 did not exist in 2010 and we have others that were
18 never vocal about their needs and others who have
19 grown in the past ten years, and our -- many of our
20 communities fit in this criteria.

21 Now I'm going to share a little bit
22 of data and then I'm going to pass it on to my
23 colleagues.

24 The first thing we want to share is

1 that Muslim communities across the nation are one of
2 the most diverse groups. We are not a religious
3 organization, but we do want to highlight that race,
4 class, faith and ethnicity all connect. We ask that
5 you consider these as critical aspects of our
6 communities while doing the redistricting process.

7 Now, this slide shows the diversity
8 of American Muslim communities in Illinois. Those who
9 identify as Muslim also identify as African-American,
10 Asian, White, Arab, Latino, African immigrants, and
11 many do not know this because we're often times
12 invisible communities. Between my husband and I we're
13 Arab, White, Irish, Cherokee and so on.

14 And right here I want to show that
15 Illinois has per capita the largest populations of
16 Muslims in the country. Yes. That's right. More
17 than New York, Texas or Michigan.

18 Knowing this and the fact that
19 there's not one single Illinois state legislator that
20 identifies as Muslim is simply unjust and we do
21 believe that redistricting can help this.

22 Now, I worked as a -- I worked out in
23 the field, you know, getting people to fill out the
24 census as a community organizer with my husband this

1 past cycle and I do gotta say that this -- Illinois is
2 so much more diverse than I ever knew.

3 I met with several Hemia (phonetic)
4 community, Syrian refugees, people that were scared to
5 take the census. I, myself, and my husband filled out
6 the census for the first time together as a family and
7 I got my dad to fill out the census for the first time
8 and he's been here since college and, you know, he
9 said something about like some conspiracy theory so
10 why you don't fill out the census.

11 So I do want to stress that we are
12 here and we're often unseen, but we do matter, and our
13 three asks are please do not push this -- our
14 responsibility back to 2030 to ensure representation
15 to critical communities who have zero representation
16 or are underrepresented.

17 Understand that Arab communities are
18 identified as White in the U.S. census and our
19 organizations are here to provide info and resources
20 on why we think this should be changed. Often times
21 we were considered White, but we don't have the perks
22 of noninvisible White communities such as fearing
23 refugees.

24 We want to ensure that maps reflect

1 the diversity of race, ethnicity and faiths across
2 Illinois. Please use census data plus engage our
3 organizations whose members understand the racial,
4 faith, and ethnic demographics across ten counties.

5 And now I'm going to pass it on to my
6 colleague, Yusuf Vidal. Thank you very much.

7 MR. VIDAL: Hi, everyone. My name is -- or
8 good evening. My name is Jose Vidal. J-O-S-E. Last
9 name V-as in Victor-I-D-A-L, but my friend calls me
10 Yusuf. I am a resident of the southwest suburbs of --
11 of Southwest Suburban Cook County.

12 Thank you to the Chairman and Senator
13 Napoleon Harris and other senate members of our
14 districting committee for having myself and some of
15 our other community members here today.

16 While I am relatively newer to
17 Illinois it has become my home. My wife and I moved
18 to be closer to family along with being part of a
19 supportive community. We made the Southwest Suburban
20 Cook area our home in hopes of eventually purchasing a
21 home and settling with a small family.

22 We also made Southwest Suburban Cook
23 County our home to be able to attend Friday prayers
24 and other fun activities at our local mosque like the

1 Mosque Foundation and the Prayer Center of Orland Park
2 co-hosting thousands of friends and neighbors
3 throughout the region. At least, you know, during --
4 pre-COVID and, hopefully, in the future as well.

5 I feel that, you know, the Southwest
6 Suburbs are continuing to diversify and being part of
7 a Latin and Arab household, myself Chilean, my wife
8 Palestinian, we also recognize our communities have
9 been historically underrepresented.

10 While I have a checkbox I can capture
11 my ethnicity, my partner and others like her do not,
12 and so a community that has been residents, small
13 business owners like my father-in-law for the last
14 three decades and homeowners throughout the region
15 for -- they often feel overlooked.

16 And so the other thing I wanted to
17 add is furthermore and related to some of my past
18 electoral work, which I've had the privilege of doing
19 across the regions, is also noticing that the Latin
20 and MENA communities or the Middle Eastern North
21 African communities have also made Southwest Suburban
22 Cook County alongside of myself their home for similar
23 reasons.

24 So whether it be in Lyons and Palos

1 and Worth or Orland Townships our communities continue
2 to grow and acknowledge this as their permanent home.
3 So I am thankful in being able to raise my
4 nine-month-old son, who is half Latino, half Chilean,
5 half Palestinian, and I am hopeful that he may be
6 counted wholistically and our family's diversity is
7 celebrated and acknowledged.

8 Thank you again for those on the
9 committee and I look forward to a future conversation.

10 CHAIR SENATOR HARRIS: Thank you.

11 Deena, are you going to the next
12 person?

13 MS. HABBAL: Yeah.

14 Nareman, would you like to go next?

15 MS. TAHA: Thanks, Deena. Thank you, everyone.

16 Good afternoon, everyone. Honorable
17 committee chairs and members.

18 Senator Hastings, Senator Landek,
19 it's always good to see both of you.

20 My name is Nareman Taha and I am the
21 co-founder and co-director along with my business
22 partner, Itadel Shalabi, of Arab American Family
23 Services.

24 AAFS is a nonprofit special service

1 agency founded in 2001 providing care, compassionate
2 assistance to Chicagoland residents primarily in the
3 Southwest Cook County suburban region.

4 AASF is a trusted community
5 institution with the expertise in the cultural and
6 linguistic means of Arab Americans and other immigrant
7 groups in the area.

8 AAFS offers support in the areas of
9 access to both public benefits, immigration legal
10 services, domestic violence, mental health and elderly
11 services as well as sponsoring outreach programs to
12 build healthier and civically engaged families and
13 communities.

14 Despite the 2020 pandemic challenges
15 AAFS was crucial in engaging the hard to reach
16 residents in our region. Particularly immigrants and
17 limited English proficiency, LEP, speakers. AAFS took
18 the lead in standing up the first ever Arab American
19 census complete count committee in the state of
20 Illinois.

21 We have been pivotal in bringing
22 COVID-19 resources to the Southwest Suburban area,
23 especially to immigrant families, including almost
24 \$1 million in direct assistance application support

1 for rental and mortgage assistance, COVID-19 testing,
2 COVID-19 vaccinations, registration support and soon
3 on-site vaccination and as well as an Illinois
4 welcoming center.

5 We trained 47 bilingual community
6 residents to become COVID-19 community health workers,
7 several of which remained employed by AAFS as emerging
8 health navigators in the health navigator department.

9 Sorry.

10 I am a resident -- for myself I am a
11 resident of the city of Palos Park located in the
12 Southwest Suburbs of Cook County. I have been living
13 in the Southwest Suburbs for over 25 years and I have
14 served the Arab American communities in the Southwest
15 Suburbs for over 20 years.

16 Through my work and day-to-day
17 operations I have seen the community significantly
18 growing in population. Its institutions continue to
19 expand. Yet they remain largely invisible to the
20 larger community.

21 As a community expands and creates
22 community organizations, businesses, schools,
23 entertainment venues also emerge in order to meet the
24 needs of the communities at all levels.

1 One example in Bridgeview with a
2 population of 16,124 there exists a mosque serving
3 over 4,000 members, two Arabic schools, a food pantry
4 and formerly AAFS's operation place.

5 In addition, through the work of our
6 social service organization in 2020 AAFS served over
7 18,000 households, about 43,000 individuals, from the
8 following Southwest Suburbs of Cook County: Oak Lawn,
9 Bridgeview, Chicago Ridge, Burbank, Justice, Hickory
10 Hills, Tinley Park, Palos Hills, Orland Park and
11 Worth.

12 This is where the community is. In
13 the Southwest Suburbs of Cook County businesses are
14 populating streets from west of Cicero and 76th Street
15 to LaGrange Road and as far as south to Orland Park
16 and 183rd Street.

17 The population who are identified as
18 Arabic speaking in the U.S. census grew more than 42
19 percent between 2000 and 2017. The number of
20 Illinoisans who claim an Arabic ancestry has more than
21 doubled since the census first measured ethnic origins
22 in 1980 and is among the fastest growing Arab
23 populations in the country.

24 In the Southwest Suburbs Arab

1 Americans represent more than 150,000 residents, both
2 Muslim and Christian. Let me point out this is an
3 undercount since Arab Americans are classified as
4 White in the census racial classification.

5 The Arab American Institute points
6 out that the number above is likely significantly
7 lower than the actual number of Arab Americans in the
8 state. The American -- the American Community Survey
9 identifies only a portion of the Arab population
10 through a question on ancestry.

11 Reasons for the undercount include
12 that placement and limitations of the ancestry
13 question as distinct from the race and ethnicity. The
14 effect of the sample methodology on small unevenly
15 distributed ethnic groups, high levels of out marriage
16 among the third and fourth generations and distress,
17 misunderstanding of government surveys among recent
18 immigrants.

19 However, Arab -- Arab Americans
20 originate from 22 countries that share many common
21 concerns such as the need for linguistically and
22 culturally appropriate social services as well as
23 concerns about education, healthcare, immigration
24 discrimination, hate crimes and racial profiling.

1 As the community grows and speaks and
2 spreads across the multiple districts, it makes the
3 work for community organizations like ours very
4 difficult. As a result community issues do not have a
5 unified voice and remain unresolved.

6 Overall, sporadic communities have
7 very little impact and have very little power to
8 influence change. We ask that we can include -- we
9 ask that we include equitability in a fair
10 redistricting process and that keeps immigrant
11 communities like ours together.

12 Arab American Family Services
13 testified today with details about our rising
14 population and the devastating harm that we face as a
15 result of unfair vote dilution.

16 We are asking for a representative in
17 our district that is compact and ticolous (phonetic)
18 that respects the contours of our community identity
19 and protects voters. The fair representation of our
20 community is a crucial step in having our unique needs
21 effectively addressed.

22 The redistricting process needs to
23 keep Arab American communities whose residents have
24 common ground in terms of history, ethnicity, language

1 and social concerns and who should be kept together in
2 one single district during redistricting. District 1.
3 Bridgeview, Burbank, Chicago Ridge, Oak Lawn and
4 Justice.

5 There are also clusters that
6 represent a significantly high population of Arab
7 Americans that share in having common ground in terms
8 of history, ethnicity, language and cultural and
9 social concerns which should be kept together in the
10 Southwest Suburbs of Cook County. Cluster 1 should
11 include Hickory Hills, Palos Hills and Worth.
12 Cluster 2, Palos Park, Palos Heights and Orland Park.

13 AASF and its partners will be
14 submitting maps that reflect the cities and
15 communities in this region, but we want to make you
16 aware of the specific racial and ethnic classification
17 challenges that we face as a community.

18 Although not solved at the federal
19 census level, we are asking you as a representative
20 body to do your due diligence and go beyond the usual
21 racial classification to accurately assess Middle
22 Eastern North African, MENA, communities. This will
23 take additional work and resources, but it is the only
24 way to get to equity for the Arab American

1 communities.

2 According to the Office of Management
3 and Budget's federal guidelines on race and ethnic
4 measurements, persons from the Middle East and North
5 Africa, MENA, are considered White, Caucasian, by
6 race.

7 When filling out the census, some
8 Arab Americans choose to select some other race and
9 write in their ethnicity or countries of origin.
10 Although these responses are tabulated by the Census
11 Bureau, by law they must be reassigned to an existing
12 race category for purposes of published reports.

13 Redistricting, et cetera. Arab
14 American Institute is working with the Census Bureau
15 to get access to these Arab responses to some other
16 racial research purposes.

17 As a community Arab Americans have a
18 strong commitment to family, economic and educational
19 achievement and making contributions to all aspects of
20 American life. Their Arab heritage reflects a culture
21 that is thousands of years old and includes 22 Arab
22 countries of the Brexit: Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco,
23 Yemen, Tunisia and Palestine, stretching from North
24 Africa in the west to the Arabian Gulf in the east.

1 That is why the racial ethnic
2 category of Middle East and North Africa, MENA, has
3 been emerging as a more appropriate classification and
4 part of a national movement for better census data in
5 our community.

6 Although we got very close in 2018,
7 the U.S. Census decided not to include the category
8 which would have been similar to the Hispanic category
9 which also includes several different nationalities,
10 diverse races, but one common language.

11 Arabs across these regions are
12 ethnically, religiously and politically diverse but
13 descend from a common linguistic and cultural
14 heritage.

15 Selected population characteristics
16 by Arab American Institute. At least 3.9 million
17 Americans are of Arab descent. Arab Americans live in
18 all 50 states, but two-thirds are concentrated in ten
19 states and one-third of the total live in California,
20 New York and Michigan followed by Florida and
21 Illinois.

22 About 94 percent of the Arab
23 Americans live in metropolitan areas. Los Angeles,
24 Detroit, New York, New Jersey, Chicago and Washington

1 DC are the top five metropolitan areas of Arab
2 American concentration.

3 Lebanese Americans constitute a
4 greater part of the total number of Arab Americans
5 residing in most states although in New Jersey
6 Egyptian Americans are the largest Arab group.

7 Americans of Arab descent make up the
8 majority of Arab Americans in Tennessee surprisingly.
9 While the largest population -- largest Palestinian
10 population is in California the greatest concentration
11 of Palestinians can be found in Illinois. These are
12 almost as many Iraqis living in Michigan as there are
13 living in California even though California is 3.5
14 percent larger than Michigan.

15 The Arab American community is one of
16 the fastest growing populations in the United States
17 estimated at 3.5 million on the -- in the 2010 census.
18 The nation's increasing Arab American communities are
19 in California, Michigan, Florida, New York and
20 Illinois.

21 In Illinois, specifically the
22 Southwest Suburbs, the clustering of the Arab
23 Americans are evident in Burbank, Oak Lawn, Chicago
24 Ridge, Justice, Hickory Hills, Palos Hills and Orland

1 Park.

2 Despite the turnout in numbers many
3 voters face difficulty in executing their votes due to
4 language barriers, lack of knowledge of how the system
5 works and have never been given the freedom to vote.

6 The Arab American community is a
7 community of interest. They share cultural, economic
8 and political and social ties. These ties exist
9 because of a common regional origin and language and
10 dialect spoken.

11 In addition, the cultural and social
12 ties are also noted to the existence of various
13 organizations and institutions with the Arab American
14 communities. One being a social service organization
15 like Arab American Family Services meeting the needs
16 of its community members with the south -- within the
17 Southwest Suburbs listed above.

18 The population who identified an
19 Arab-speaking ancestry in the U.S. Census grew by more
20 than 32 percent between 2000 and 2018. Since ancestry
21 was first tabulated by the census in 1980 the number
22 of Illinois residents who claim an Arab or Palestinian
23 or Syrian background have almost tripled. It is
24 estimated that the statewide population for 2010

1 adjusting for underrepresenting is close to 220,000,
2 which is completely an understatement.

3 Surprisingly, Lebanese and Syrian do
4 not make up the largest percentages. In Illinois the
5 older Lebanese and Syrian population has been
6 surpassed by the larger and growing second weight
7 Chicago-based community which features significant
8 percentages of Syrians, Palestinians and Jordanians.
9 The Chicago area is home to one of the largest
10 Palestinian communities in the country with many
11 choosing to identify as Arab or Arabian.

12 Arab Americans can be found in 79 of
13 102 counties counted in Illinois. More than
14 three-quarters of those claim an Arab ancestry in the
15 metropolitan counties of Cook and DuPage County.

16 Maximizing opportunities for
17 individuals to become engaged also requires
18 interstitial changes. Included in this is the ability
19 to have a meaningful and fair chance to elect
20 officials who represent the group's concerns,
21 interests and priorities. In part this requires not
22 fragmenting an Arabic American neighborhood into small
23 and ineffective slivers that are spread over many
24 electoral districts.

1 Arab Americans are relatively new to
2 this process. Community-based organizations and
3 public interest groups now have greater technical and
4 political capacities to participate in redistricting,
5 but there are new challenges. Perhaps the most
6 important is determining whether a neighborhood is a
7 community of common interest.

8 To conclude we urge you to go beyond
9 available race and ethnic categories and do your due
10 diligence and extract the Arab American numbers. We
11 are a vibrant community with a growing number of Arab
12 Americans being elected to public office and we
13 deserve equity in the mapping process and the
14 opportunity to fair political representation.

15 For the sake of our growing
16 communities we cannot afford to wait another ten years
17 for the federal government to do the right thing, for
18 our government form to be changed before we get access
19 to fair and equal representation in the state of
20 Illinois, and with that thank you so much.

21 CHAIR SENATOR HARRIS: Thank you. Thank you
22 for your testimony, Miss Taha. We definitely
23 appreciate that.

24 Deena, are you -- are there a few

1 more, Deena?

2 MS. HABBAL: Yeah. There is two more.

3 So, Lena, can you go next?

4 MS. TLEIB: Sure.

5 Thank you and good evening to all of
6 you. My name is Lena Tleib. I'm a resident of
7 Burbank, Illinois, have been living there for over 30
8 years, have been active in the Bridgeview community
9 for 24-plus years as far as I can remember. I started
10 very young.

11 I work currently with Zakat
12 Foundation of America as a regional development
13 specialist for the region -- or the state of Illinois
14 and we do a lot of work with the community.

15 Zakat Foundation of America is a
16 humanitarian relief organization which many of you are
17 already aware of. We're leaders of empowering life
18 through Zakat and (inaudible) who are -- work --
19 during COVID we were assisting so many families with
20 food distributions, and many of the representatives
21 actually came out and witnessed the work itself, and
22 different communities even in Chicago took part of it
23 in representatives so we're grateful for that.

24 But I have a lot of experience

1 with -- and worked with Mosque Foundation, and that's
2 the prayer center that I attend, Universal School,
3 Upta (phonetic) School and different organizations
4 such as Mask (phonetic) and, you know, with -- with
5 growing up even as a teen being part of the voter
6 registration and census I had very little experience
7 in it.

8 I worked as a volunteer for -- for
9 some time, but I did notice that we are -- our
10 community had very little representation. We
11 sometimes even had a hard time in the past getting
12 officials to come out and recognize the work.

13 I'm not going to be lengthy in my
14 testimony, but I just want to say that our community
15 is growing and it's growing really fast and we are a
16 well-developed community. Yes, of both citizens and
17 immigrants, but we are a part of this community.

18 We're involved and implementing great
19 things connecting and collaborating with other members
20 of the community and working really hard to -- to just
21 work with humanity and doing the right thing.

22 So I would really love that we have a
23 little bit more representation in the elected office
24 from the larger community, the larger Arab community,

1 that live in Cook County.

2 So thank you for your time and I
3 appreciate the platform to give my opinion.

4 CHAIR SENATOR HARRIS: Thank you.

5 MS. HABBAL: And, lastly, could we have Itedal?

6 CHAIR SENATOR HARRIS: Okay.

7 MS. SHALABI: Hi. Thank you so much.

8 Deena, I did not prepare. Nareman
9 spoke on both of our behalves and for our community.

10 I think if I just want to say and
11 reiterate what Nareman said is we testified ten years
12 ago and we didn't see any changes and we hope that we
13 go into this redistricting with open minds and open
14 hearts to allow for representation, to allow for
15 communities to come together, and to allow for
16 communities that have been challenged for a long time
17 to be able to take a stand doing the great work that a
18 lot of you have been doing and doing it with you all.

19 And so I truly appreciate the
20 opportunity to be here, Deena, Nareman, Senator
21 Landek. I see Senator Hastings. All of you, thank
22 you so much for being here, being such great pillars,
23 and we hope you continue to be a pillar for the Arab
24 American community. Thank you.

1 MS. HABBAL: Do you mind if I say one last
2 thing?

3 CHAIR SENATOR HARRIS: Yes. Go ahead.
4 Proceed, Deena.

5 MS. HABBAL: Okay. I just want to say thank
6 you all for having us and really stressing if you can
7 please use the census data for redistricting because
8 it was not easy during a pandemic to be out in the
9 heat with a mask being around, you know, 200, 300
10 people sometimes at different events just trying to
11 get people to fill out the census.

12 So we really want to stress that we
13 did a lot of work with AAFS and tons of different
14 organizations, ICER, everyone. So, please, we just
15 want to say that last part. Thank you very much.

16 CHAIR SENATOR HARRIS: One last thing, Deena.
17 I'm sorry. The young lady that just spoke previously
18 before you can -- can she please state her name for
19 the record.

20 MS. SHALABI: Sure. My -- absolutely, Senator
21 Napoleon. Itedal Shalabi. Do you want me to spell
22 it?

23 CHAIR SENATOR HARRIS: Yes, please. So the
24 court reporter can have it.

1 MS. SHALABI: Itedal, I-T-E-D-A-L, last name
2 S-H-A-L-A-B-I, and I'm local founder and executive
3 director of Arab American Family Services.

4 CHAIR SENATOR HARRIS: Thank you. I appreciate
5 that.

6 So at this time seeing that you guys
7 are done with your testimony I'm going to open it up
8 for -- well, first are there any additional witnesses
9 before we start?

10 (No verbal response.)

11 CHAIR SENATOR HARRIS: Okay. Seeing none I'll
12 open it up to questions.

13 Senator Hastings.

14 SENATOR LANDEK: It's really more of a comment
15 and for the court reporter I apologize. My friends
16 from the Arab American Family Services [speaking in
17 foreign language]. In English that translates to
18 thank you very much and you're always welcome here at
19 this hearing. So thank you very much for your
20 testimony and, Mr. Chairman, I have no questions. I
21 just wanted to say it's always nice to see who wants
22 to take part. Thank you.

23 CHAIR SENATOR HARRIS: Thank you,
24 Senator Hastings, and I echo those sentiments. Thank

1 you guys for being here. Really appreciate you guys'
2 testimony.

3 Senator Curran, I see your hand up.
4 Please proceed, Senator.

5 SPOKESPERSON SENATOR CURRAN: Thank you,
6 Mr. Chairman. I wanted to ask a question of Deena.

7 First I want to thank everyone on the
8 panel for coming out this evening and testifying.
9 You've all done a wonderful job lending voice to your
10 community.

11 Deena, you had mentioned in your
12 slideshow map -- you know, proposed maps by April.
13 Could you give an update on that? Where you're at in
14 that process as we just started the month of April
15 now.

16 MS. HABBAL: Yeah. We're working on some maps
17 that we will be submitting by April 30th. We're
18 working on them through representcivil.org and we will
19 have updates and we'll send them while -- while we're
20 doing that.

21 SPOKESPERSON CURRAN: And would we expect to
22 see -- Nareman testified -- testified about a district
23 and then some clusters. Could you kind of maybe just
24 one of you explain the difference there? What you're

1 talking about or identifying there.

2 MS. HABBAL: I'll let Nareman take that one.

3 MS. TAHA: [Technical difficulties].

4 MS. HABBAL: Nareman, I think you're muted.

5 CHAIR SENATOR HARRIS: Miss Taha, you're muted.

6 Hit the unmute button before you speak.

7 MS. SHALABI: She may have gotten stuck.

8 CHAIR SENATOR HARRIS: Okay.

9 SPOKESPERSON CURRAN: You know what, I can move
10 on from that question and if she fixes, maybe she can
11 (inaudible) later in the hearing.

12 Deena, I just wanted to go over --
13 you said it very clearly, I think, the strong
14 preference -- it sounds like your organization did a
15 lot of work in the Arab community with regards to the
16 U.S. Census. It sounds like a very strong preference
17 for using census data.

18 MS. HABBAL: Mm-hmm.

19 SPOKESPERSON SENATOR CURRAN: Obviously, the
20 census data is not ready yet so the proposals you're
21 going to have ready by April 30th would not be
22 precise. With regards to data they would be more
23 generic proposals is what we would expect to see?

24 MS. HABBAL: Well, we're going to reach out to

1 all of the organizations who are working on the ground
2 in different communities to help us create these maps
3 because we believe they know of their communities and
4 they can -- they're best at helping us create these
5 maps instead of us just creating them for all these
6 little pockets.

7 SPOKESPERSON SENATOR CURRAN: Okay. Nothing
8 further, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

9 CHAIR SENATOR HARRIS: All right. Thank you.

10 I have a question, Deena. Deena, do
11 you guys plan on drawing maps and submit them to the
12 portal that sendems (phonetic) have established?

13 MS. HABBAL: Yes. That's correct.

14 CHAIR SENATOR HARRIS: Thank you.

15 MS. SHALABI: Mr. Chairman, may I speak?

16 CHAIR SENATOR HARRIS: Yes. Please.

17 MS. SHALABI: On behalf of Nareman she's not
18 able to get unstuck, but I believe what she was
19 talking about to answer Senator Curran's question
20 clusters is that she was pointing out where the
21 majority of the Arab Americans are and if there was
22 any -- any maps to be redrawn to be redistricted that
23 those clusters be looked upon as a way to bring a -- a
24 pace to a district for the Arab American community.

1 I think right now we're actually --
2 as an Arab American community to be in the Southwest
3 Suburbs we're fragmented between almost eight or nine
4 representatives, legislators, and so when we have a
5 voice to speak besides Senator Landek and a couple of
6 other senators and representatives, you know, our
7 voices get lost in the shuffle and -- because
8 everybody has a little piece of us but don't have the
9 full piece of the Arab American community, and so we
10 would love to have the ability for those clusters to
11 be developed into a district.

12 I think if Nareman can shake her head
13 yes or not if that's what we were getting at.

14 MS. TAHA: (Indicating).

15 SPOKESPERSON CURRAN: Well, thank you for
16 jumping in there. I appreciate that.

17 MS. SHALABI: That's what we do. We're
18 partners.

19 CHAIR SENATOR HARRIS: Thank you, guys, for
20 that testimony.

21 Are there any other questions?

22 (No verbal response.)

23 CHAIR SENATOR HARRIS: I'm scanning now. Okay.
24 I don't see any.

1 I just would like to say, ladies and
2 gentlemen, as a reminder the Senate Subcommittee has
3 the following hearings posted: the redistricting Lake
4 and McHenry County Subcommittee in person and virtual
5 on Wednesday April 7th at 3:00 p.m.

6 Also, the City of Chicago Northwest
7 Subcommittee's virtual on Thursday, April 8th at 5:00
8 p.m., the Redistricting East Central and Southern
9 Illinois Subcommittee virtual on Friday, April 9th at
10 3:00 p.m., Redistricting Southwest Illinois
11 Subcommittee in person and virtual on Monday,
12 April 12th at 11:00 a.m., and Kane and Kendall County
13 Subcommittee virtual on Thursday, April 15th at 3:00
14 p.m.

15 We also have the Chicago West Cook
16 and Cook County West Subcommittee in person and
17 virtual on Friday, April 16th at 3:00 p.m., and as we
18 continue the discussion on redistricting, I ask those
19 that have testified today and those listening to
20 please engage with the committee as we work through
21 the information that all community voices are heard.

22 If you have any further documents or
23 information or questions, feel free to send them to
24 redistrictingcommittee@senatedem.ilga.gov, and I would

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1 recommend also if you're interested in drawing
2 legislative maps, please go to our website
3 [www.ilsenate](http://www.ilsenate.com) -- ilsenateredistricting.com where you
4 can draw the senate and house maps and submit them to
5 the committee.

6 Seeing no further business coming
7 before the committee this meeting of the Senate
8 Redistricting Subcommittee on Southwest -- South
9 Suburban communities stands adjourned. Thank you,
10 guys.

11 (Meeting adjourned at
12 5:43 p.m.)

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1 STATE OF ILLINOIS)
2) SS:
3 COUNTY OF LAKE)

4 I, Susan R. Pilar, Certified Shorthand
5 Reporter for the State of Illinois, do hereby certify
6 that the foregoing was reported by stenographic and
7 mechanical means, which matter was held on the date,
8 April 5, 2021, and at the time and place set out on
9 the title page hereof and that the foregoing
10 constitutes a true and accurate transcript of same.

11 I further certify that I am not related to any
12 of the parties, and I have no financial interest in
13 the outcome of this matter.

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19 Susan R. Pilar, CSR
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