



Prepared Remarks
Nicole Robinson
Policy Analyst, ACLU of Georgia
House and Senate Joint Redistricting Committee Hearing
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Columbus State University, Cunningham Center

To the Chairs and Members of the House and Senate Redistricting Committees, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.

My name is Nicole Robinson, and I am a Policy Analyst at the ACLU of Georgia. I had the privilege of speaking before this committee at the redistricting hearing in Dalton last month, and as a proud Georgian, and as someone whose roots in Georgia go back centuries, I appreciate the opportunity to speak with y'all today here in Columbus on a topic that will impact all Georgians for years to come.

The ACLU of Georgia firmly believes that the right to vote is one of the most sacred civil liberties we have as Americans and that fair maps are crucial to ensuring that every vote counts equally, and we believe that fair maps are crucial to preserving our democracy.

Today, I want to talk a little bit about the population changes that have occurred in the Greater Columbus area over the last 10 years, the importance of fairness and transparency in the redistricting process, and a few observations on the current district boundaries in the Greater Columbus area- all of which we urge this committee to truly consider and act upon during the redistricting process this fall.

The Greater Columbus Area has grown more diverse in the last 10 years- that includes Chattahoochee, Harris, Marion, Muscogee, Stewart and Talbot counties.

The overall population of the Greater Columbus Area has increased by almost 3 percent and The Voting Age Population in the Greater Columbus Area has increased by nearly 5 percent. And on top of that, the Black voting age population has increased by nearly 11 percent. The Hispanic voting age population has grown by over 20 percent. The Asian voting age population has grown by almost 26 percent. And the White voting age population has decreased by over 2 percent.

Overall, the people of color voting age population in the Greater Columbus area has grown by about 12 percent.

Looking more specifically at each State Legislative District in the area, every State Senate District and all but one State House District in the Greater Columbus area has seen a sizeable increase in their people of color voting age population. On the flipside,



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all state senate districts and all but one state house district in the area have had their white voting age population decrease.

These demographic changes must result in maps that adequately reflect the diversity of the Greater Columbus area. The maps that are drawn in 2021 need to take the diversity of the community into account and ensure that voters of color have the same opportunity to elect candidates of their choice as white voters do- this is vital to protecting the right to vote of all Georgians.

In furtherance of protecting the right to vote of all Georgians, the redistricting process requires fairness and true transparency. This means providing more opportunities for public hearings across the state *after* the full Census data has been released in the Fall, and having a robust mechanism for citizens to provide feedback on proposed maps.

True transparency and fairness also mean that the public is entitled to see the criteria used to draft maps and provide substantive feedback on draft maps before a final vote takes place. In the current atmosphere, with so much misinformation and disinformation, transparency and fairness are key to preserving faith and confidence in our democracy.

The decisions made during this redistricting process will impact the lives of countless Georgians for the next ten years or more. This is a tremendous responsibility before the legislature, and we urge this body to ensure that the voices of all Georgians are heard and meaningfully considered, because our democracy depends on it.

Thank you all for your time.