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April 27, 2021

Quitman County Board of Registrars  
P.O. Box 447  
Georgetown, Georgia 39854

Via Mail, E-mail, and Publication

**Re: Objection to Polling Place Closures in Quitman County**

Dear Quitman County Election Officials:

The ACLU of Georgia writes in response to your proposal to eliminate one out of the two polling locations in Quitman County. Because Quitman County is a majority-Black county,<sup>1</sup> Black voters are most likely to be harmed by this closure. We write to warn you that closing half of your polling places in this manner potentially violates Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act and the United States Constitution. Therefore, we demand that you reject this proposal.

**Racial Impact of Closures.** Eliminating one out of the two polling places in a majority-Black county is discriminatory and unjustifiable. Morris precinct, the polling location that the Board is considering shutting down, serves an electorate that was 38.5% Black as of the November 3, 2020 election.<sup>2</sup> This is higher than the proportion of Black voters in the state of Georgia (30.0%) for the same election.<sup>3</sup> Closing Morris precinct would therefore have a disproportionate impact on Black voters. This is true even if the proposed closure affects a relatively small number of voters. As a federal court of appeals has stated, “[t]he right to vote is personal” and it “is not defeated by the fact that 99% of other people” can cast a ballot easily.<sup>4</sup>

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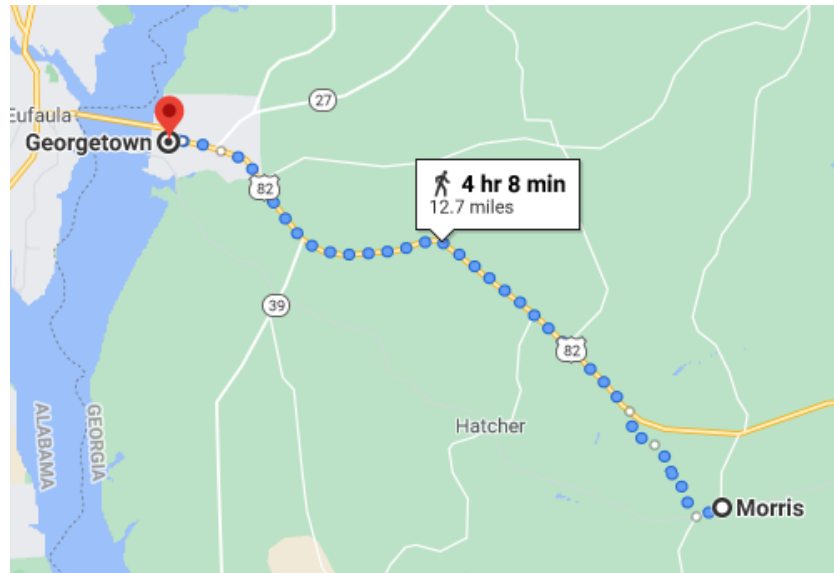
<sup>1</sup> See Exhibit A.

<sup>2</sup> This figure is based on data collected by the Office of the Secretary of State. See General Election Turnout by Demographics, Office of the Secretary of State, available at <https://sos.ga.gov/index.php/elections/general-election-turnout-by-demographics-november-2020> [last accessed on April 26, 2021].

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> *Frank v. Walker*, 819 F.3d 384, 387 (7th Cir. 2016).

Thus, even if 1% of voters face high barriers to voting, that is too high for constitutional purposes.



*Image 1: Map illustrating distance from Morris to Georgetown (Source: Google Maps).*

**Transportation Burdens.** Additionally, eliminating a polling location that serves the eastern half of the county will prevent rural voters living around Morris without transportation from voting in-person on Election Day. Morris is approximately 13 miles away from Georgetown, where the last remaining polling location in the county would be located. It would take over four hours to walk from Morris to Georgetown. Because Quitman County has little to no public transportation options, a voter who wants to vote but does not have a car would face significant, and potentially insurmountable, hurdles to exercising their right to vote.

**Racial Impact of Transportation Burden.** These transportation burdens would also fall more heavily on Black voters. A plurality of Quitman County residents, who are disproportionately Black, have either no car or only one car per household.<sup>5</sup> When polling place configurations or closures have such a stark, disproportionate impact on racial minorities or lower-income voters, such actions may constitute a violation of the Voting Rights Act or the United States

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<sup>5</sup> See Exhibit B. It should also be noted that Quitman County's median income is 48% lower than the rest of the state (\$30,000 compared to \$61,980). See Exhibit C. Furthermore, Black residents of Quitman County are more likely than other racial groups to be in poverty, making up 62.7% of residents living in poverty in the county. See Exhibit D.

Constitution. Federal courts have not hesitated to strike down these types of plans on these grounds.<sup>6</sup>

For these reasons, we urge you to reject the proposal to close the Morris precinct.

Sincerely,



Sean J. Young  
Legal Director  
ACLU of Georgia



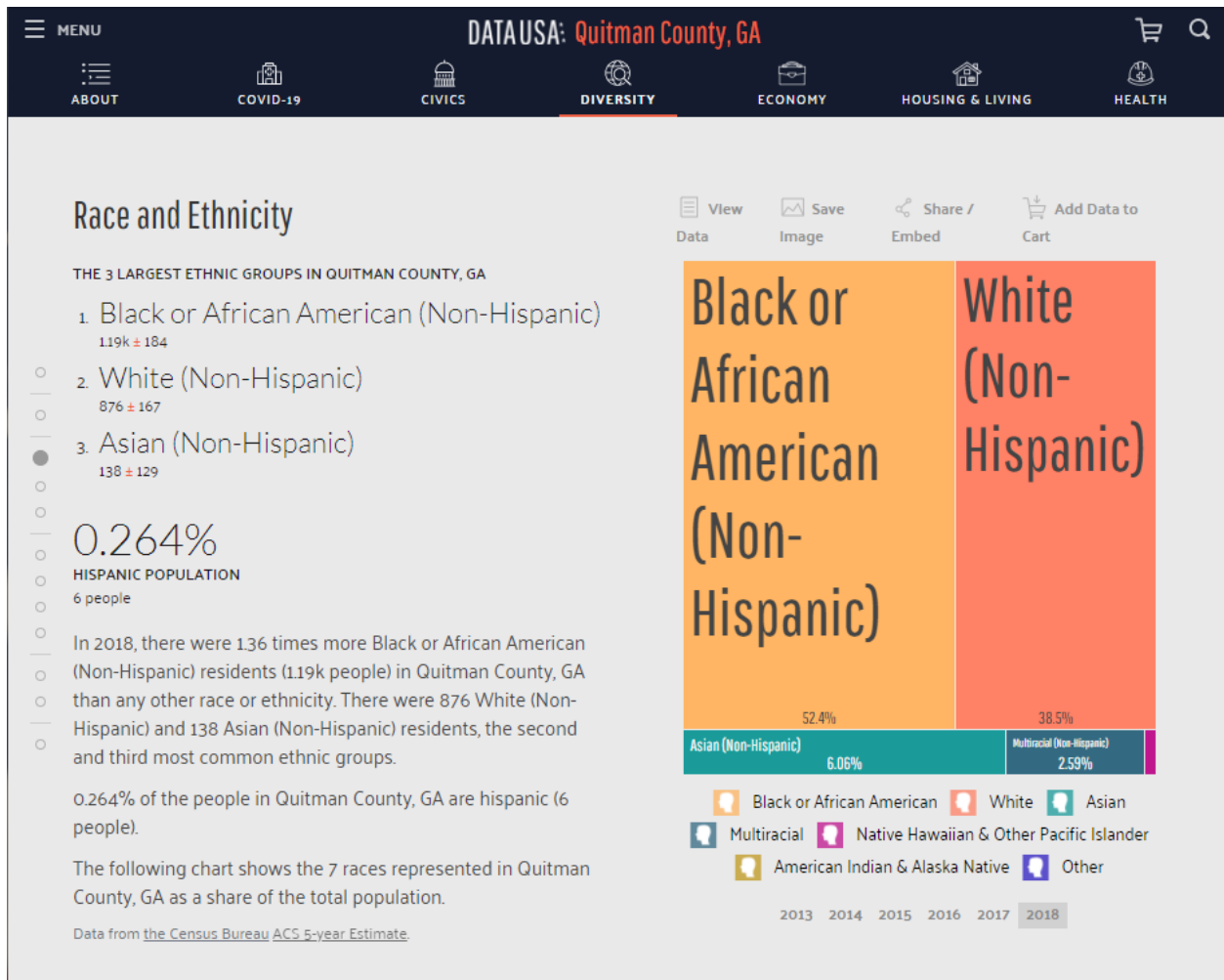
Rahul Garabadu  
Voting Rights Staff Attorney  
ACLU of Georgia

Encl: Exhibits A-D

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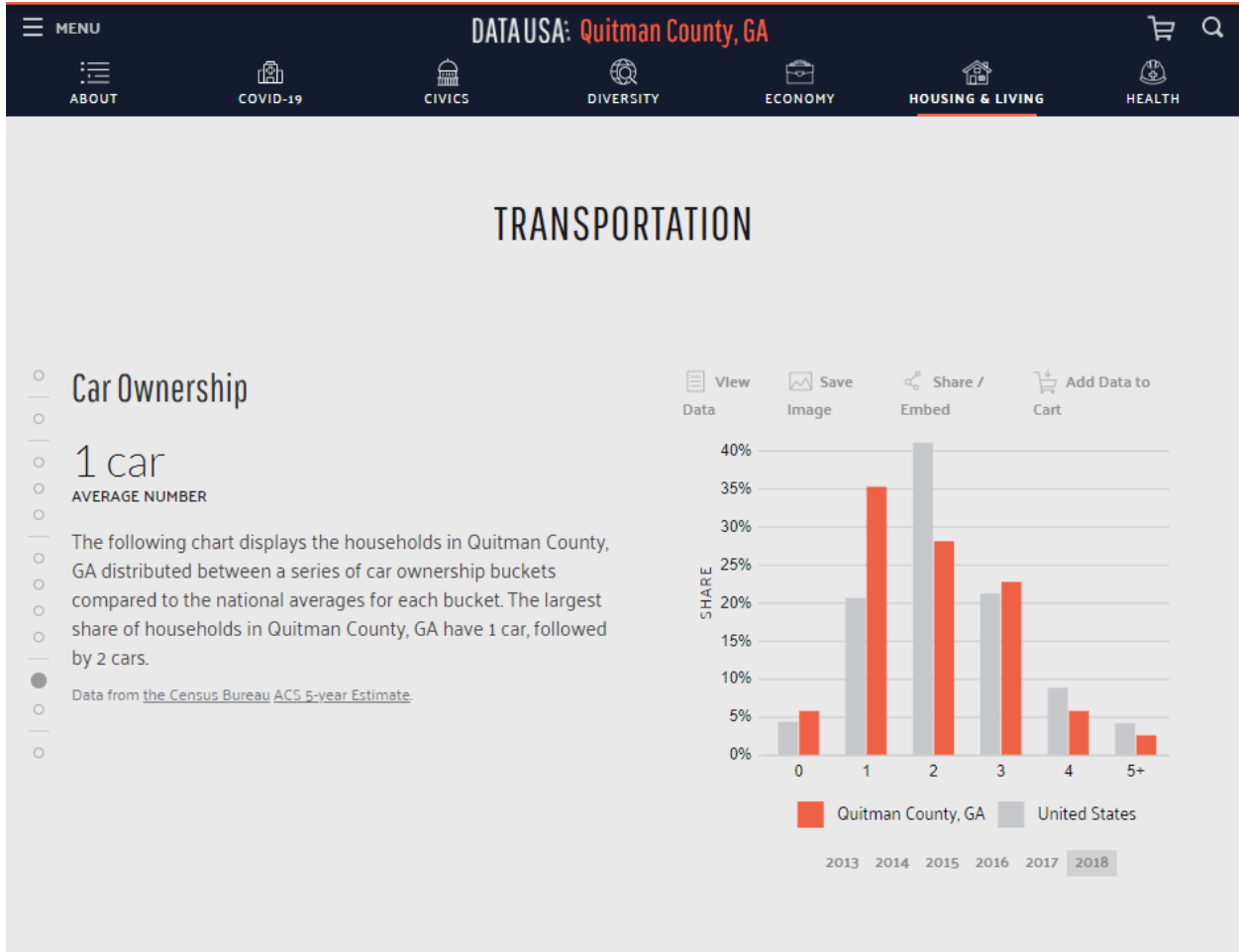
<sup>6</sup> See, e.g., *Sanchez v. Cegavske*, 214 F. Supp.3d 961, 974 (D. Nevada Oct. 7, 2016) (likely violation of Voting Rights Act where “the distance [one] must travel [to polling location] are a material limitation that bears more heavily on members of [the Native American tribe]” compared to white voters, “especially given their relative difficulty in accessing transportation [and] affording travel”); *Brown v. Dean*, 555 F. Supp. 502, 504-05 (D.R.I. 1982) (“the use of polling places at locations remote from black communities, or at places calculated to intimidate blacks from entering (when alternatives were available)” likely violates Voting Rights Act); *Spirit Lake Tribe v. Benson Cnty.*, No. 2:10-cv-095, 2010 WL 4226614, at \*3-\*4 (D.N.D. Oct. 21, 2010) (closure of polling place on Native American reservation likely violated Voting Rights Act, in part because Native Americans within the county have “markedly lower socioeconomic status compared to the white population”).

# **EXHIBIT A**



Source: <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/quitman-county-ga#economy>

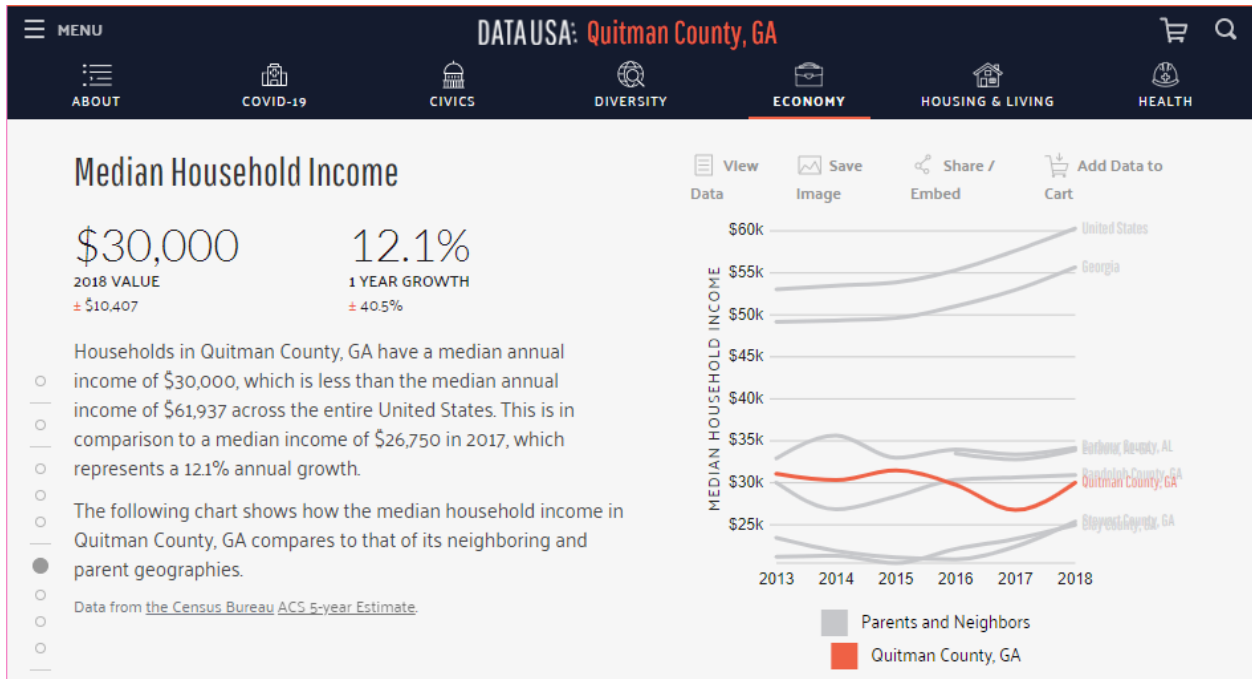
# **EXHIBIT B**



Source: <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/quitman-county-ga#economy>

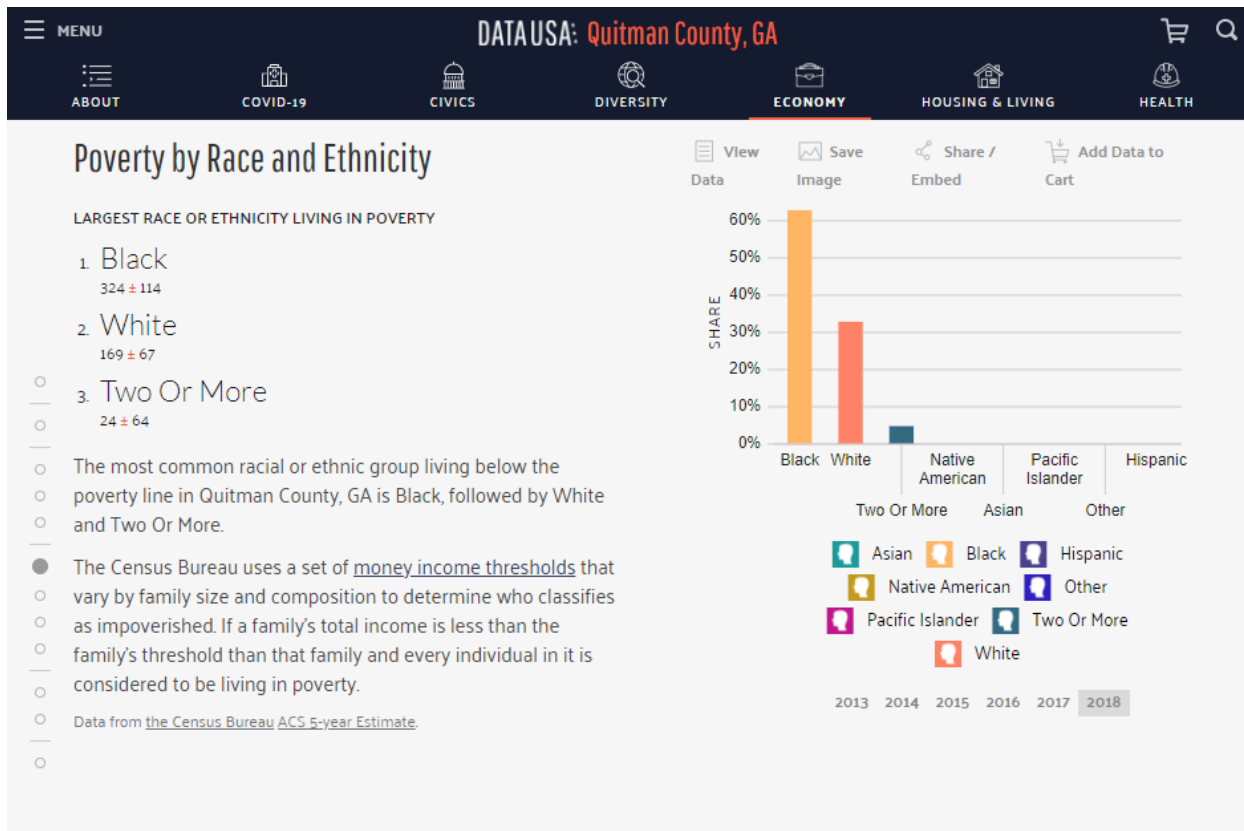
# **EXHIBIT C**





Source: <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/quitman-county-ga#economy>

# **EXHIBIT D**



Source: <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/quitman-county-ga#economy>