

COMMON CAUSE NEW YORK'S TESTIMONY TO NASSAU COUNTY TEMPORARY DISTRICTING ADVISORY COMMISSION SEPTEMBER 21, 2022 PUBLIC MEETING

Thank you for the opportunity to be heard today. I am Abbey McHugh, an organizer with Common Cause New York. Common Cause is a national nonpartisan advocacy organization founded in 1970 working to ensure that every vote counts, that every eligible voter has an equal say, that our elections represent the will of the people, and that our government is of, by, and for the people. Common Cause New York is one of the most active state chapters within Common Cause, with tens of thousands of members and activists in every county of New York State.

Fair redistricting is a major policy focus for Common Cause across the country and in New York State. Our national Redistricting & Representation Program helps members of the public play an active role in shaping their own representation and lead efforts to create fairer, more inclusive and impartial processes for drawing districts. We also litigate to challenge partisan and racial gerrymanders in state and federal courts around the country.

Common Cause New York has offered insight on local redistricting processes at the county and municipal level as well as statewide, and today we are here with a few, what we believe to be, fundamental recommendations that will help Nassau County's redistricting process be more transparent and center people during this process. Members of the public who have had an opportunity to be heard and to engage with the Commission regarding proposed maps are less likely to resort to legal challenges to those maps.

First, it is imperative to hold public feedback meetings *after* any proposed map. We've seen in other counties that public input is most clear and helpful to the redistricting commission after a proposed map since people have something to base their comments on. We applaud your work this month in traveling around the county to gather feedback before a draft map: we strongly urge you to do similarly after releasing a proposed map. There's ample time, since The Commission has until January 7th to deliver its mapping plan to the Legislature. With that timeline in mind, early October should not be the last time this commission faces the public.

Second, accessible meetings that allow all to participate without barriers are essential to a fair redistricting process. Not only does this help Nassau constituents with disabilities tell you their feedback freely, but also those who sometimes cannot find free time to participate, like parents.

Finally, the draft map that your commission produces should reflect the changes to the county since the last census and put the priorities of the people ahead of politicians. Long Island continued its decades-long pattern of increasing diversity in the 2020 census. This ongoing shift is especially strong in Nassau County, with those of voting age identifying as Hispanic growing by 16.8 percent, Asian by 11.3 percent, and Black by 11.1 percent. Protecting the political power of communities of interest through the redistricting process is an important criterion in the New York Constitution's redistricting provision. Thank you.