



Honorable Members of the Joint Reapportionment Committees Committee:

My name is Aunna Dennis and I am the Executive Director of Common Cause Georgia. Common Cause has long been an advocate for fair and transparent redistricting processes across the country, including working with legislative champions to support redistricting reform legislation in Georgia.

For too long, redistricting has been done behind closed doors, placing the needs of partisan politicians over the needs of communities. 2021 is an opportunity to change that. Accordingly, Common Cause strongly urges the Georgia General Assembly to commit to a fair, transparent, and open process of drawing district lines that prioritizes communities, particularly Black, Latinx, AAPI, Indigenous and other communities of color that have traditionally been left out of the process. During the previous redistricting cycles many decisions were made in secret and with sparse public input nor knowledge of proceedings. This past April Common Cause Georgia and 16 other organizations have called on the legislature to amend Georgia's Open Meetings Act to be transparent.

If we are to both rebuild trust in our government and ensure that every Georgia voter has equal opportunity to elect candidates that share their lived experiences and values, we must guarantee that the redistricting process is open, transparent, and provides ample access for public input. Increasing transparency is a critical part of a fair redistricting process. This should include:

1. Holding several in person and virtual hearings across the state at a variety of times during the day to encourage comment and participation from as many Georgians as possible. These hearings should be scheduled with sufficient advance notice to allow those who want to participate enough time to prepare;
2. Creating multiple avenues for public comment to be submitted, including but not limited to, a website portal, an email address, public hearings, etc.
3. Providing live language translation services so that Georgians who do not speak English can participate. We also recommend providing a transcript of each proceeding to ensure accessibility for those who cannot attend;
4. Providing public access to the data used to draft maps as well as a public comment period on draft or final maps before passage.
5. Consider using official procurement procedures to obtain mapping experts, redistricting legal experts, and any other contractors who may be used in the redistricting process.
6. Provide a written report explaining the justification for decisions to divide communities, municipalities, or counties. This report should be released concurrently with the final maps and should be available for public review online.

Common Cause looks forward to working with the Georgia General Assembly to ensure that the 2021 redistricting process works for all Georgians and ensures that everyone has an equal opportunity to make their voice heard in the redistricting process.

In Community,
Aunna Dennis