

December 18, 2023

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Re: Ensuring Transparent Redistricting Commission Hearings

Dear Commissioners,

We, the undersigned organizations, write to urge you to prioritize transparency and public participation as you resume drawing New York's congressional map in the coming weeks. Our organizations represent a broad range of groups and communities that remain deeply invested in an equitable and transparent process that includes substantive input from New Yorkers around the state. We firmly believe that an open redistricting process is critical for ensuring that the voices of all New Yorkers are heard.

New Yorkers deserve the opportunity to weigh in on district lines before they are finalized despite the challenges presented by the procedurally set timeline for the creation and submission of the new map. The adherence to a strict timeline should not be achieved at the expense of the interests of everyday New Yorkers. Notwithstanding the position expressed by some commissioners in their December 15 statement, we note that several commissioners are newly appointed and do not have the benefit of having heard directly from New Yorkers at the hearings held in 2021 and early 2022. Moreover, prior hearings held were not in response to current congressional maps drawn by the Special Master.

The Commission should solicit feedback from New Yorkers by holding hybrid hearings at different locations in the state. The Commission should also allow the public to submit written testimony that the Commission is required to share with all commissioners. Such hearings and written testimony are required to ensure that any new map reflects the diversity of New York's population and upholds the principles of the Voting Rights Act. To ensure fair representation for all New Yorkers, we urge you to protect communities of interest and minority voices throughout the state.

Finally, the Commission should make it clear that its duty is to the public, not elected officials or political parties. Holding mapping deliberations in public will significantly help the Commission achieve this goal. It is our hope that the Commission collaborates and prioritizes reaching a

consensus on the new map. New Yorkers deserve a redistricting process free of gridlock, and we ask that the Commissioners do everything in their power to reach an agreement.

The lack of public trust in New York's redistricting process is pronounced and voters are weary of ever changing district lines and the attendant uncertainty it brings right before a consequential election cycle. We urge the Commission to make every attempt at collaboration, meaningful public input, openness and transparency before submitting any new congressional map plan to the Legislature.

Sincerely,

APA VOICE Redistricting Task Force
Asian American Legal Defense & Education Fund (AALDEF)
Citizens Union
Common Cause/NY
Empire State Indivisible
League of Women Voters New York
New York Civic Engagement Table (NYCET)
New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC)
New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG)
Reinvent Albany