

COMMON CAUSE PENNSYLVANIA LETTER

Legislative Reapportionment Commission

April 26, 2021

Dear Members of the Legislative Reapportionment Commission (LRC),

Thank you for your expressed commitment to an open and transparent process for selecting the fifth member of the LRC. We were excited that you opened the application process to all interested Pennsylvanians and hope that you continue the selection process in the spirit of openness and transparency.

Common Cause Pennsylvania is a nonpartisan grassroots organization representing 35,000 supporters and members in every corner of the Commonwealth. We have long been committed to ensuring transparency and accessibility across all parts of our government and advocating for a redistricting process that prioritizes the needs of Pennsylvania's communities over those of incumbent politicians.

As you know, the fifth member of the LRC serves as the chair and is an integral part of the redistricting process. For too long, legislative and senatorial maps in Pennsylvania have been drawn behind closed doors with limited opportunity for public involvement. If we are to both rebuild trust in our government and ensure that every Pennsylvania 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.

The selection of the fifth member of the LRC is the first opportunity for the LRC to demonstrate its commitment to transparency. As such, we strongly encourage the LRC to take the following steps in its selection process:

1. Provide public access to the names and application materials of all applicants to the LRC, with appropriate redactions of personal information such as street address and telephone number.
2. Provide a list of any applicants who are deemed unqualified to serve on the LRC along with the reason they are unqualified.
3. Schedule a public meeting, or series of meetings if necessary, to discuss, debate and appoint the fifth member of the LRC. These meeting(s) should be in addition to the two meetings that are currently scheduled to interview the applicants.

While Common Cause Pennsylvania is not advocating on behalf of or against any particular applicant to the LRC, we encourage the LRC to take into account the following factors in appointing the chair.

1. Does the person have an understanding of the historical racial, ethnic, and socio-economic implications of redistricting in Pennsylvania and, explicitly how it has been used to disadvantage communities of color in our state?
2. Does the person have the capacity, interest, and open-mindedness to listen and take testimony from individuals and organizations from varying perspectives across Pennsylvania?

3. Does the person come from a background, including race, ethnicity, primary language, sexual orientation, gender identity or other, that have traditionally been excluded from the redistricting process?
4. Does the person have skills and/or experience in building bridges and achieving compromise and/or having difficult conversations or negotiations?
5. Does the person have capacity to understand the nuances of the redistricting process in Pennsylvania, including willingness to rely on neutral experts on issues such as the Voting Rights Act?

Pennsylvanians deserve a redistricting process that puts our communities at the center, prioritizes accessibility and transparency, and endeavors to ensure that voters in every Pennsylvania legislative and senatorial district have an equal opportunity to elect a candidate that shares their values and lived experience. The job of the LRC will not be easy and we thank you in advance for your commitment to a fair, equitable, and transparent process.

Sincerely,

Khalif Ali
Executive Director
Common Cause Pennsylvania

