

Testimony of Phyllis Blumberg (Southeast Regional Hearing)

I am Phyllis Blumberg and I live at 332 Kent Rd. Bala Cynwyd in Pennsylvania's 4th Congressional District. I am a white, middle class, suburban woman but I care deeply about proper representation for all people especially those of color and frontline communities.

I have lived in this district over 25 years and my area has been redistricted several times. To deny adequate representation to my suburban Phila. and leaning toward Democratic section of Montgomery County, we have been redistricted inappropriately into other districts. Once we were sliced into a very thin section and added to the more rural and tending toward Republican Berks County district. Next we were moved into a solidly Democratic and largely Black district in Phila. In both cases my community was a token part of the district. The representative only was interested in courting our money when they were up for reelection but had no interest in talking to us once they were elected. In fact we felt that we were not even represented in the US House of Representatives because they never came to our neighborhood, they never talked to us, and they never addressed any of our issues. I am concerned that redistricting could once again throw us a district that does not represent us suburban Philadelphians.

While my current district represents my community, I do not think it represents the entire district appropriately. My current district includes much of Montgomery County, which is suburban Philadelphia, however it also includes a small part of the eastern part of Bucks County which is more rural and not as metropolitan Philadelphia centric.

I also have six concerns about the overall house district map. Here are my recommendations for how to improve the redistricting process to make it better reflect the reality of PA.

- o The maps that were redrawn in 2018 were meant to be proportional in terms of our overall population voting tendencies. While this was a step in the right direction we did not achieve this goal completely because the Republicans continue to have a geographic advantage since the Democrats tend to concentrate in urban areas. This allows districts to be cracked and packed which dilutes the voices of urban communities.

- o I am concerned about diluting the voices of urban populations, especially for communities of color that tend to be concentrated in urban areas.

- When people of color are all packed into the same district, they get a representative, but their power is diluted. This may sound counter intuitive, but it is not for the following reason: When districts are packed with a supermajority of people of color, their voices are limited to just those few districts, leading to far less representation overall.

- Many studies have shown that more racially diverse districts lead to people of color having more voice. When a district that is made up of greater than one-third of a specific race, then there is a good opportunity for a person of that "specific" race to represent the district.

- People of any race should not be divided into other districts. so that they are only a token of the overall population. This is what we experienced in my previous districts.

- Black, Hispanic/Latinx should not be packed unnecessarily into a few districts.

- Determining the districts especially in Philadelphia, Reading, Pittsburgh, and the Lehigh Valley, needs special attention to give equitable representation to blacks and Hispanics/Latinx communities.

- o Local voting precincts should be kept intact. School districts in Montgomery County should be kept intact as a district. This is not the case now.

- o Districts should be drawn in such a way that the shape isn't crazy.

o PA needs to lose a US Representative. There has been a population shift away from central, northern, and western parts of the state and toward the suburban metropolitan areas particularly of Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. Therefore, the districts need to reflect the current reality with fewer seats where they lost population and appropriating more seats to the metropolitan areas particularly suburban Allegany County, Philadelphia and the five collar counties around Philadelphia.

o Redistricting should not prioritize keeping incumbents in office. It would be better to start with a clean slate to make the district maps.

- This might mean that two incumbent officials run against each other but that could be an effective way for the voters to choose who represent them.

- It might also provide the opportunity for new candidates to emerge.

- Just because one of PA's representatives to Congress is seeking election to the US Senate that does not mean that the voters from this district should be reapportioned into other districts as a way of protecting the incumbents. This district is gaining in population.

Thank you for allowing me to the opportunity to provide testimony and for your attention to these concerns.