

## **Testimony of Charles Black (Philadelphia Regional Hearing)**

Good afternoon Chairman Grove and Members of the Committee.

My name is Charles Black, and I am the Pennsylvania Coordinator for the Fair Elections Center's Campus Vote Project. I am also a part-time adjunct professor and am currently a graduate student at Temple University. I am a lifelong Pennsylvanian and have never missed an election since I was able to vote.

Campus Vote Project is a national nonpartisan organization that works with campuses across the country to institutionalize programming to help students to register to vote, cast their ballots, and be civically engaged. In PA, we currently work with over 32 institutions including all types of campuses.

I am here today to urge the committee to make colleges and universities a community of interest as you undergo the redistricting process for congressional maps. Our existing maps should not be used as a starting place in this process. There are years of inequality drawn into them. The political maps drawn in 2021 should reflect the changing demographics of our commonwealth.

According to the National Study of Learning Voting and Engagement, the voting rate of college students in our commonwealth grew from 15.9% in the 2014 midterm election to 37% in the 2018 midterm elections. This rate is expected to be even higher once we receive 2020 data. College students are a key demographic, and their institutions must be viewed as a community of interest.

Colleges are communities, and there are students and campus administrators that I work with that have said they feel they are left out of the process. We are working hard to change that.

As we look at the current congressional districts, one of our concerns is that Temple University is drawn into both Congressional District 2 represented by Congressman Brendan Boyle and Congressional District 3 represented by Congressman Dwight Evans. This split can be both confusing and decrease fair representation.

Redistricting must not be a partisan issue. The new maps that you create should be drawn with the interests of all Pennsylvanians in mind, guided by a commitment to racial equity and full representation for all. College-age voters, particularly persons of color, deserve the opportunity to elect representatives that will be responsive to the interests and concerns of their communities.

This committee is charged with an incredibly important task, and college students from around the commonwealth are watching and advocating for fair maps. We ask that you draw maps that respect the needs of Pennsylvania's college population and all other communities of interest. Thank you for your time.