



September 8, 2021

Good evening Chairman Haddad and Chairman Kelly and members of Connecticut’s Reapportionment Committee:

My name is Cheri Quickmire, and I am the Executive Director of Common Cause in Connecticut. Common Cause is a nonpartisan, grassroots organization dedicated to upholding the core values of American democracy. We work to create open, honest, and accountable government that serves the public interest; promote equal rights, opportunity, and representation for all members of society; and empower all people to make their voices heard in the political process. We represent over 15,000 members and supporters in Connecticut and over 1.5 million members and supporters nationwide. One of our main areas of focus is the creation of fair and transparent redistricting processes across the country, and we are working with legislatures and coalition partners to support redistricting reform in Connecticut.

Common Cause firmly believes that voters should choose their representatives, rather than having representatives cherry pick their constituents. During previous redistricting cycles, many decisions were made within the Legislature, with little public input or advance notice of proceedings. While this way of redistricting may have been considered business as usual for the Legislature at the time, Common Cause Connecticut, and our 15,000 members are demanding real transparency and fair districts in 2021. Drawing new district lines will impact every person living in our communities, so drawing district lines behind closed doors cannot be an option. The people of Connecticut deserve transparency and should be included in every step of the redistricting process. We must do away with the business-as-usual mindset of the past and ensure every person in every town across the state, from Stamford to Stafford is represented and heard in this process.

Fortunately, 2021 provides this committee the opportunity to change the way redistricting has been done in past cycles. Redistricting is a process, that will impact every teacher, every small businessperson, every mother trying to obtain resources her child, and every father working three jobs to feed his family. We strongly urge the Reapportionment Committee and the soon-to-be appointed Commission to commit to a fair, transparent, and open process of drawing district lines that prioritizes communities of interest, particularly underrepresented communities and communities of color that have traditionally been left out of the process. Communities of interest should be maintained intact to every extent possible, and that they be heard before the final redistricting decisions are made, so that they have a fair shot to elect candidates who will not only be responsive to their concerns but whose liberation is wrapped up in their liberation.

If we are to both rebuild trust in our government and ensure that every voter has equal opportunity to elect candidates that share their actual experiences and values, we must guarantee that the redistricting process—which ultimately is the public’s redistricting process on how they want to be represented in the legislature—is open and transparent.

We are encouraged by, and appreciative of, the work you have done so far to provide voters with an open process. The work you are doing will help ensure that all residents have the opportunity to be

represented by legislators who understand their needs and their communities, rather than starting from a position of asking what redistricting plan is the most politically expedient.

Still, as we go forward, we want to ensure that all aspects of the process remain transparent and open, and that the public can both understand and participate in developing the redistricting plan which, at the end of the day, is their redistricting plan.

We recommend that the Redistricting Committee undertake the following steps :

1. Educate the public on the requirements for redistricting: how the state draws its lines, the laws and priorities that govern its decisions, and the timeline from start to finish. This should be done as early in the process as possible, and the material should be available online in Spanish as well as English. This will help manage the public's expectations, which will create transparency from the outset and make the process go more smoothly.
2. Hold several in-person and virtual hearings across the state at different times during the week—some during evenings and weekends—to enable engagement and participation from as many residents as possible. These hearings should be scheduled, and the agendas advertised, through the CGA website and social media accounts with sufficient advance notice, to allow those who want to participate enough time to prepare.
3. Creating multiple avenues for public comment to be submitted in addition to at the public hearings, for example, through a closely monitored website portal or email address. Residents should be encouraged to speak about their communities—communities of color, communities of place, economic communities, cultural communities—and to say how they want to be grouped and represented.
4. Providing live language translation services of all meetings in American Sign Language and other languages as identified by local representatives. Nearly 12% of the state's residents speak Spanish as their primary language, and they deserve the same representation and opportunity to be heard as native English speakers. We also recommend that you post a transcript of each proceeding to the CGA website to ensure accessibility for those who cannot attend.
5. Offering at least two weeks after the publication of draft maps, and two weeks after the publication of final proposed maps, for public comment. In addition, we recommend that you make the data you use to draft maps available to the public as soon as possible, so members of the public can work with the data themselves. If you accept publicly drawn maps during the hearing and comment process, you may discover communities of interest of which you previously were unaware, and those maps may help you draft the final plan.
6. Making internal planning meetings and other deliberations open to the public, either by live streaming or, at a minimum, publishing full transcripts/videos of the meetings to the CGA website within 24 hours.
7. If the draft or final plan does divide specific communities of interest or individual municipalities or counties, providing a written report explaining why it does so. This report should be released concurrently with the maps and should be available for public review and comment online.
8. Use adjusted redistricting data to reallocate people incarcerated at the time of the census are reallocated back to their home communities. Connecticut will have the data set that best counts incarcerated people at home and minimizes padding of districts with prisons once: people with geocodable addresses have been counted in their home census blocks; correctional group

quarters counts have been subtracted from the census blocks where prisons are located; and people without a last known, unusable or out-of-state address have either been subtracted or placed back in the census block where they are incarcerated, depending on what is permitted or required under state law. As a rough guide, a 70% reallocation success rate would be considered a good outcome, since Connecticut going through the process for the first time.

We also strongly recommend that, where possible, you use a public procurement process to obtain the services you'll need, be they of mapping experts, redistricting legal experts, or any other contractors who may be used in the redistricting process. Such a procurement process should include the issuance of a Request for Proposals that is publicly available and that clearly states:

- the services needed;
- the qualifications offerors should have;
- the method that the evaluating body will use to review each proposal; and
- the requirement that offerors fully disclose any possible conflicts of interest they have that could affect the outcome of their services.

Running each procurement with the same level of transparency as the redistricting process itself will give the public and the legislators alike confidence that the plan will be developed in a competent and even-handed manner, without favoring any party or incumbent, and that the interests of the public in creating a fair redistricting plan will come first.

Common Cause looks forward to working with the CT Redistricting Committee and the Redistricting Commission to ensure that the 2021 redistricting process works for all Connecticut residents and that everyone has an equal opportunity to make their voice heard in the redistricting process.