

36 Overlook Place
Trumbull, CT 06611

Reapportionment Committee
Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

September 13, 2021

Dear Members of the Reapportionment Committee:

I appreciate the opportunity to make comments at a public hearing about the important issue of reapportionment. Our democracy is fragile, and what puts our democratic ideals most in danger is public apathy, which comes from cynicism about the political process. A recent Pew Research poll found that only a bare majority of Americans (55%) believe that ordinary citizens can influence their government, down seven percentage points from 2016. Pew also found that 67% of Americans believe that most politicians are corrupt. This cynicism is dangerous and erodes the pillars of our democracy. As a teacher and scholar of Constitutional Law, I frequently hear concerns about the integrity of the political system in the voices of my students. If voters believe that their political system lacks transparency and they cannot raise their voices to effect meaningful change, they will not become educated on the key issues facing our state and will not be the active participants in our government that we need them to be to have a healthy democracy. We must restore public trust in government.

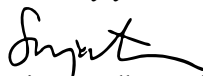
Reapportionment is a foundational constitutional requirement, but it also gives rise to concerns about the public's ability to have a meaningful voice in their government. People view this process with suspicion, worried that it may reflect that their representatives are choosing their voters rather than voters choosing their representatives. Even though Connecticut has a bipartisan process for reapportionment, the fact that this process is a political one, rather than being handled by an entirely independent commission, already makes it suspect in the minds of voters. Given this fact, transparency is critical.

During this period, it is crucial to educate Connecticut's citizens on our procedures—and particularly on the commission's bipartisan character—to ensure as much faith in the process as possible. The commission should:

- Educate citizens on the process through mailers and the media,
- Seek meaningful input, including after draft maps have been produced,
- Offer sufficient time for public comment prior to final decisions being made,
- Incorporate substantive aspects of the public comment into the final maps, and
- Make all deliberations of the commission publicly accessible.

Thank you for all your hard work on behalf of Connecticut's residents.

Sincerely yours,



Sujata Gadkar-Wilcox
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