

From: applications.administrator@capitol.local
To: [Senate Redistricting](#)
Subject: INETMAIL: Redistricting Public Input
Date: Thursday, March 23, 2023 9:13:25 AM

Date: 2023-03-23
First Name: Megan
Last Name: Sham
Title: N/A
Organization: self

[REDACTED]
City: Houston
State: TX
[REDACTED]

Affirm public info: I agree

Regarding: Senate

Message:

Thank you Committee Members for giving me this opportunity to speak to you all. My name is Megan Sham, representing myself. Fair maps should be drawn in consideration for all communities: every person, regardless of language, ethnicity, or any aspect of their identity, Our communities deserve a chance at fair and equal representation for the future. The creation of new opportunity districts would allow for stronger voices of minorities to permeate our local, state, and national governments. I am a native Houstonian who grew up in Fort Bend County, in House District 26. I felt fortunate to grow up in such a diverse community, attending schools where I met friends from many different cultures, languages, and socioeconomic backgrounds. I learned so much beyond academics through my community, from learning how to properly address my friends' parents in their native languages to how to dance a simple merengue. Even though I grew up seeing many people who were different than my own family, I knew that there was a difference in how certain schools in the district were treated. My own school was rather old, but we received a decent amount of funding through our academic achievements. The schools in the district range from having half of their classrooms in "temporary" trailers that became permanent to having buildings able to hold thousands of students. While there may not have been explicit favoritism, the schools that had majority minority students tended to be the ones in neighborhoods that weren't as shiny and new. Thus, the funding for new gadgets and fancy things were more of a priority in the higher-end neighborhoods, or schools with exceptional scores. While this cannot be entirely split on racial groupings, it is clear that we didn't have representation in school boards, the local government, and the state legislature that the communities of color deserve. These proposed maps that we already testified on in 2021 only serve to further alienate communities of color from representatives that can understand their needs and struggles. The 2020 census proved what many of us could already see - that minorities are growing in number and power across the state of Texas. In the proposed maps, it is clear that this information has been used against us, as the proposed districts pack the non-white population of Fort Bend County into two districts in order to lessen the number of representatives they might have. There are no opportunities for competitive districts, taking away the people's right to choose their representatives. We, the people, deserve to have our voices heard. We, the people, have been ignored even through this process of redrawing map lines. How can we claim to be a state of freedom and equality when we don't allow all people to experience the same right to representation that this country was founded on? Additionally, claiming that these maps were drawn "color blindly" does not serve to uplift communities of color in Texas. We ought to recognize and

appreciate the differences that different groups of people have, and factor that into how we ought to be represented on all levels of government. In addition, the treatment of these hearings in the past has been a brash show of the lack of consideration that you all have for the public who wishes to testify for you today. The public, who both applied to testify online and in-person at the capital, spent hours waiting to be called to give you their concerns. While it is understandable that you all are extremely busy people, and that these hearings tend to go long, that is no excuse for how poorly executed the hearing has been. There was absolutely no order to how the people have been called to testify. It was a clear manipulation tactic that not only was the House committee hearing scheduled at 9AM, the exact same time as the Senate committee hearing, but that it was scheduled on the same day as a regular House session. I would dare say that you all were well aware that the special committee hearing would go into the afternoon, when the House would go into session, knowing that it would tire out those who traveled from all corners of Texas to testify in front of you. Not only did you disregard the public's wishes to have adequate time to understand and testify for or against HB 1, you deliberately wasted our time after many have rushed to be in Austin. I would plead with this committee to actually sit down and pay attention to us when we speak, but it is past the time for pleasantries. We demand that there be proper and logical rules in place to have our representatives hear us.

