

From: applications.administrator@capitol.local
To: [Senate Redistricting](#)
Subject: INETMAIL: Redistricting Public Input
Date: Saturday, September 25, 2021 11:05:02 AM
Attachments: [SB4.docx](#)

Date: 2021-09-25
First Name: Sarah
Last Name: Berel-Harrop
Title: N/A
Organization: Self
Address: [REDACTED]
City: Farmers Branch
State: Texas
Zipcode: [REDACTED]
Phone: [REDACTED]

Affirm public info: I agree

Regarding: Senate

Message:
See attached

[REDACTED]

TO ADD – Land doesn't vote; fix Harris, Travis, Bexar, other counties/cities, more on the benefit of community district, less ideological stuff.

My name is Sarah Berel-Harrop. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. I am a retired CPA, a seminarian and an aspirant to the Unitarian Universalist ministry. I oppose SB4, plan 2101. One of the fundamental principles of my faith movement is the use of the democratic process. These maps are a cynical subversion of the democratic process.

I have lived and voted in Travis County, SD7 in Harris County, and SD15 in Harris County. Living in Travis and Harris County, I was very familiar with maps that employed a strategy of packing voters into certain districts and then cracking communities into multiple other districts that sprawled for miles and miles into communities that had no common interests.

When I moved to the DFW area, I finally was in a district which seemed to make sense. I live in Farmers Branch in SD16, an extremely diverse and compact district which currently has a population of 926,818, within 1.4% of the ideal sized district. Farmers Branch is a suburb in Dallas north of I635 and near I35E. Farmers Branch adjoins other suburban areas such as Irving, Coppell, and Addison, all of whose amenities I use. SD 16 as the map is currently drawn encompasses parts of Dallas and Dallas suburbs roughly within several miles north or south of IH635 from the western edge of Coppell and Irving (except Richardson), including a portion of Garland, to the county line at Rowlett. I served as an election worker during the 2020 election within the district in Coppell, Farmers Branch, and Rowlett. The various parts of this district share an identity as suburban communities within an urban county. There is no good reason to dismantle this district.

And yet, the proposed map does in fact dismantle my district. The eastern end gets cracked into SD2, which stretches about 90 miles south to the Navarro County line as well as about 60 miles east to the Van Zandt County line. A portion of Irving gets packed into the new SD16 which weirdly winds around Dallas like a snake. And my community, Farmers Branch, along with several other communities currently within SD16, gets cracked into SD12, which stretches 80 miles from my house into Wise County. The voting power in my district, originally configured within Dallas County, is now broken into districts that spread through **ten** counties which have no connection to our communities (Dallas, Denton, Tarrant, Wise, Collin, Ellis, Kaufman, Navarro, Rockwall, and Van Zandt). While on paper, SD16 is still within Dallas County and comprises about 35% of Dallas County, under the proposed map, my community is disconnected from other like communities and dropped into districts dominated by rural communities who do not share our economy, culture, needs, or priorities. This pattern of busting apart compact urban areas and suburbs and tacking them onto sprawling rural districts repeats all over the DFW area, notably with what the breakup of the Dallas northeast suburbs of SD8 and with the egregious manipulation of SD10. This map cynically and opportunistically dilutes the votes of people who live in

major population centers using gerrymandering to bolster senators whose communities lost population in the census. We see you. These maps are not fair and they are not representative of the people of Texas.

Texas has never, not once, since the voting rights act was first passed in 1965, drawn maps that did not have a discriminatory racial impact. The proposed maps do not deviate from this longstanding pattern. The voters of SD16 as the current boundaries are drawn include large enough numbers of non-Anglos as a percentage of the district that a candidate cannot disregard them – the district is a majority minority (55.1%) district in terms of voting age population. In contrast, the percentage of non-anglo voting age population is 48.4% and 42.3% in SD 2 and SD12, respectively. On its face, this seems discriminatory to me; particularly considering (1) the existing district was closer to the ideal voting size than ANY of the proposed SD16, SD2, or SD12 and (2) the fact that the 2020 census reflected high population growth in Dallas, and that the population growth was fueled by growth in the number of people of color.

Of note, the Asian American population in North Dallas, including my congregation's town of Carrollton which is home to a large Korean community, Collin, and Denton counties grew by 87% from 2010 to 2020. This is reflected in the current maps wherein Asians comprise 14.6% and 21.3% of the current lines of SD16 and SD8, where my sister lives. Rather than allow these communities to remain intact, they have been cracked between SD2, SD12, SD8, and SD30. Specifically, there is an increase of 50,000 in population, from 3% to 8% of the district, in SD2 and almost 70,000, from 3% to 10%, in SD30, another sprawling, predominantly rural district.

Fair maps would accurately reflect the population growth – which was in and around urban areas – and the type of growth – which was fueled by non-whites, particularly Hispanic people. Instead, the district lines crack the areas of population growth in ways that dilute urban and suburban voting power, which also dilutes non-anglo voting power. As a racialized White woman, I raise my voice to say it is past time to reject Texas' familiar patterns and to stop minimizing Black and Latino voters voices. Rural areas are also ill served by these gerrymandered maps, since they are, also, stuck in districts with communities with disparate needs from theirs.

This extreme gerrymandering is harmful in that it further polarizes and skews the composition of the senate, which is already in thrall to Republican primary voters. The proof is in this year's legislative sessions. Divisive, unpopular, and punitive legislation such as bullying of trans children, assaults on women's reproductive rights, banning of teaching graduate school concepts which aren't even being taught in high school, and preemption bills which prevent local officials from effectively governing communities based on their constituents' priorities occupies legislative time while fiscally responsible and popular policy initiatives such as Medicaid expansion do not see the light of day. Common-sense initiatives that would mitigate the crisis of Black maternal mortality and morbidity in Texas, such as HB133, were watered down and still barely passed the senate, while important, bipartisan criminal

justice reform bills were killed in Senate committee. Competitive districts are good for everyone. They promote engagement in the political process and genuine policy discussion.

I ask that the committee reject these maps and to instead draw maps that are fair, competitive, redress past racial inequities, and represent ALL Texans. I also believe that we should have non-partisan redistricting committees instead of this partisan process.