

October 11, 2011



**Testimony on Behalf of OneAmerica
Washington State Redistricting Commission**

MISSION
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by building
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in collaboration
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I am here on behalf of OneAmerica and its members. As you know, and have seen OneAmerica is a member-based organization and our members are across the state, from multiple communities including African, Latino, Asian, and many other ethnicities. What our members and allies all share, in spite of where they come from or where they were born, is a desire to participate fully in our democracy and to have their interests represented.

We APPRECIATE the difficult work of the Commissioners who are giving their time and expertise to such an important process and have been present for all these hearings around the state. We would like to thank you for, so far, steering an open process that invites and responds to community input. We are excited to see better representation of immigrant communities and communities of color in your proposed maps.

We are PROUD that we have turned out real members of real communities around the state to speak about their priorities and how they can truly be involved in shaping our communities and our democracies. And to demonstrate that our members are continuing to stay engaged I have with me over 300 letters from people across the state. But also you've noticed that support for majority minority districts are being reflected in the press and getting support from across the state including editorial boards like The Yakima Herald, The Colombian in Vancouver.

I have stated this before but we need only look to the statistics, which I have shown you, to make the case for how immigrant communities from different parts of the world in South King County and Eastern Washington share so much in common in terms of their disenfranchisement and neglect. Three issues—health, wealth and education—clearly demonstrate the mutual interests within these communities and the gaping disparities compared to others.

The reality is that major issues impact our communities like high rates of diabetes, low birth weight rates, and lack of maternal health, closing the educational achievement gap. These communities should be given the power to influence whether or not elected officials feel obligated to respond to the community's needs and take action to reduce health disparity and support educational equity.



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We support the “Majority Minority” district in South King County, as drawn by Commissioner Huff. Many OneAmerica members advocated for this exact district and it was truly gratifying and empowering to see this very map, the “Unity Map,” included in the draft plans. We believe this district—with no incumbent—presents the best opportunity for strong representation of immigrant communities and communities of color in Congress. We appreciate Commissioner Huff’s listening to our communities.

Continue to keep Yakima and the Tri-cities in the same Congressional District. All four maps have Yakima and Tri-cities in the same Congressional District. We support this effort.

We support the creation of “Majority Minority” state legislative districts. As a result, we urge you to create three majority people of color state legislative districts in King County, one in Tacoma and at least one majority Latino state legislative district in Yakima. Of the map drafts that have been released so far, we support the efforts of Commissioner Gorton and Commissioner Ceis, who both created majority Latino legislative districts. However, we prefer the draft of Commissioner Ceis, whose legislative district is nearly 60% people of color, something that will help ensure representation that listens to our communities.

We support a unified Pasco. All of the commissioners said during the release of the maps that keeping cities together is a priority. However, two of the four maps cut Pasco—with its large Latino and immigrant population—into two different districts. Cutting Pasco in half will only dilute the power of the large Latino and immigrants populations in the city.

Now comes the real test, will it be business as usual? You have a great opportunity to provide hope to thousands and thousands of people across WA State that are waiting to see if the voices of the people are actually heard.

We are COMMITTED to continuing to as we have done to work both with the Commissioners and the Legislature to make sure that this redistricting process does not simply become the same political process that regularly sidelines communities of color and communities in need from accessing services, participating in democracy and ensuring that ALL of our communities move forward together.

Thank you, again, for your work and we urge you to continue to provide us with the hope of fair representation.