

[Date]

North Dakota Legislative Redistricting Committee

Re: Redistricting Testimony by [Name]

Dear Committee Members:

Chairman Devlin and members of the Redistricting Committee, my name is [Name], and I am from [town, reservation and tribal affiliation]. In North Dakota, the Native American population grew by 29.7% in the last decade, and I am here to ask the Committee take into consideration the perspectives of the Tribes and tribal members in the redistricting process.

[Include a more detailed description of yourself and your tribal community, including information you believe to be important, such as your position, your connection to your tribe, significant geographic areas on the reservation, important traditions and customs that you or the tribe practice, any relevant events where the Tribe or community has worked with (or has needed to work with) elected officials on a particular problem, etc.]

[Include any relevant data you may have from your tribe or from the U.S. Census Bureau to describe your community, such as population, average income, education attainment, language, housing, ethnicity, crime rates, etc.]

I am here today to ask that the Committee: (1) adopt single-member House districts for tribal areas; (2) adopt a “Community of Interest” standard for communities with similar language, culture, and identity, to keep tribal nations together within districts; and (3) provide a full opportunity for Tribes and tribal members to participate in the redistricting process by holding redistricting hearings on and near reservations.

First, I am asking the Committee to adopt single-member House districts to prevent the dilution of Native American votes. Tribes and tribal members in North Dakota have had to fight for the right to vote, whether by defeating illegal voter I.D. laws, opposing district lines that dilute the Native American vote, or by demanding on reservation polling locations. At-large voting systems, like the current one used for the North Dakota State House, violate the Voting Rights Act when they dilute minority voting power by preventing tribal members from electing the candidate of their choice. North Dakota law allows for the creation of sub-districts and that is what should be done. Single-member House districts, or sub-districts, within districts containing reservations would allow tribal members to elect the candidate of their choice as required under the Voting Rights Act.

Second, a “Community of Interest” standard should be used by this Committee, which takes into consideration communities that have similar language, culture, and identity, to keep those communities together within a single legislative districts. Splitting the reservation or our communities into multiple districts would dilute the ability of tribal members to elect the representative of their choice.

Third, this Committee should be holding hearings on or near reservations so that tribal members who are unable to travel to Bismarck, and who lack internet access, are able to participate in the redistricting process. There are high levels of poverty and a lack of access to transportation and broadband internet on our reservations. This Committee would be doing itself and this state a disservice by failing to provide an opportunity for all of this state's citizens to take part in this important discussion. All voices must be heard.

I thank the Redistricting Committee for its time today and am happy to address any questions the Committee may have.