

March 29, 2021

To the members of the Virginia Redistricting Commission:

**Co-Signers:**

Liz White, Executive Director,  
*OneVirginia2021*

Luis Aguilar, Virginia Director,  
*CASA*

Suzanne Almeida, Redistricting  
and Representation Counsel,  
*Common Cause*

Rev. David Denham, Lead for  
*RepresentVA*

The Hon. Michael Futrell,  
President, *National Black  
Nonpartisan Redistricting  
Organization*

Da'Quan Love, Executive  
Director, *Virginia State  
Conference NAACP*

Matthew Scoble, Executive  
Director, *Unite Virginia*

Josh Stanfield, Executive  
Director, *Activate Virginia*

Phillip Thompson, Executive  
Director, *National Black  
Nonpartisan Redistricting  
Organization*

Deb Wake, President, *League of  
Women Voters of Virginia*

Prof. Sam Wang, Director,  
*Princeton Gerrymandering  
Project*

Thank you for stepping up to serve on this historic commission. As you embark on this substantial undertaking, we, the undersigned, want to offer our assistance, our experience, and our support to your efforts to create fair and representative maps for the Commonwealth.

As Virginians who support fair redistricting and transparency in government, we were delighted to receive the release of the draft timeline for your work over the next year. We are particularly pleased that you plan to utilize the extra time provided to you by the delayed availability of the U.S. Census data to learn about the history and legal standards of redistricting, as well as the tools available to aid in the map-drawing.

**We strongly encourage the Commission to dedicate additional time and resources to thoroughly enable public communication and to determine how to best receive and incorporate feedback from diverse communities across Virginia.** We believe that the most important parts of the redistricting reforms passed over the last two years are those that elevate the role of the citizenry. The Commonwealth's legislative districts belong to Virginians, not to any political party or individual politician. The requirements that the Commission incorporate public input, consider Communities of Interest, and open all proceedings to the sunlight of transparency are the truly historic aspects of this new redistricting process.

Below is a list of questions we hope you will consider when planning your work.

We are not proposing answers to these questions, but rather using the experiences of other redistricting commissions and organizations who engage with historically marginalized populations to help you think through how you will approach them. We hope this will help guide your efforts to make the redistricting process transparent, accessible, and collaborative.

1. How and when will you advertise meetings and hearings to maximize public knowledge and participation, particularly to those not on social media and those who lack easy internet access?
2. How will you ensure that all meetings and work products are accessible, including to non-English speakers and people living with disabilities who may need accommodations to participate fully?
3. How will you prioritize protecting communities of interest in drawing maps?

4. How do you plan to receive public input and testimony on communities of interest in a way that allows you to best utilize the information? How will that public input and testimony be available to members of the public?
5. Do you plan to communicate with the public through traditional media, social media, email, or more frequent updates to the website? If so, how?
6. How will you organize your inbox so that public feedback doesn't get overlooked? Would you consider hiring a third party to develop a portal for this input?
7. Will you reach out to individuals or organizations who specialize in fair and equitable redistricting to supplement your training?
8. Will you conduct direct outreach to diverse communities across Virginia to ensure that the Commission receives a full picture of the Commonwealth? If yes, what is your plan?
9. What will be your policy on attending public events organized by groups or individuals in which community mapping concerns are being addressed?
10. Do you plan to reach out or would you consider reaching out to other commissions or subject matter experts other than those listed in the draft timeline?
11. How many public hearings do you plan to conduct? Are you able to do more if they are in a virtual format?
12. How will you handle the Chat feature in the virtual meetings, as only those registered to give public comment are currently able to participate?
13. Would you consider implementing an automatic reply on [varedist@dls.virginia.gov](mailto:varedist@dls.virginia.gov) so that members of the public know their feedback has been received?

We appreciate your commitment to a fair and transparent process and look forward to supporting your work in the coming months.

Sincerely,

Liz White, Executive Director, *OneVirginia2021*

Luis Aguilar, Virginia Director, *CASA*

Suzanne Almeida, Redistricting and Representation Counsel, *Common Cause*

Rev. David Denham, Lead, *RepresentVA*

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