

August 11, 2021

The House Legislative and Congressional Reapportionment Committee
and Senate Reapportionment and Redistricting Committee
Coverdell Legislative Office Building
18 Capitol Square, Suite 402
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

Re: Written Testimony for the August 11, 2021 Town Hall in Augusta, Georgia

Dear Chair Rich, Chair Kennedy, and Committee Members:

The Southern Poverty Law Center (“SPLC”) is a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to upholding the fundamental right of all citizens to vote and to ensuring that their vote is not diluted by unfair or unlawful redistricting plans.

Today’s hearing in Augusta is the final town hall scheduled by the House Legislative and Congressional Reapportionment Committee and Senate Reapportionment and Redistricting Committee (collectively, the “Joint Redistricting Committee” or “Committee”). We write once again to implore the Joint Redistricting Committee to provide public input opportunities in which: 1) more Georgians can participate; and 2) Georgians can provide more meaningful input. We have repeatedly proposed specific steps the Committee could take to provide a more inclusive and productive public input process, but all proposals have been ignored. June 15, 2021 SPLC written testimony (requests

analysis of these town halls:

Nearly 60% of the speakers asked for more public input, increased transparency, and all of the information used

Stephen Fowler, Sherry Liang, and David
2021 Redistricting Act Town Halls Across T

Georgia Public Broadcasting, were race/ethnicity, shared values, process changes, changing demographics, and accessibility.

Sincerely,

/s/ Jack Genberg

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EXHIBIT A

**Committee and Senate Reapportionment and Redistricting Committee on
July 29, 2021 at Macon School Mercer SMredie**

Hello, my name is Pichaya Poy Winichakul and I am a Staff Attorney with the Southern Poverty Law Center. The SPLC is a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to upholding the fundamental right of all citizens to vote.

We continue to advocate for *meaningful* opportunities for public engagement. This means the ability to attach documents—like proposed maps—to any written submission to the Committee, which the Google form does not currently allow us to do. This also means in-language materials. The online submission forms are only provided in English, which makes the form inaccessible to the over 100,000 Georgians with limited English proficiency. Moreover, there has not been an ASL interpreter at any of the hearings, nor is there closed captioning when the hearings are streamed. Finally, meaningful public engagement also means responses to the public's reasonable questions—what are the Committee's 2021 redistricting guidelines? Will you provide additional opportunity for public comment and engagement following the release of Census data? While we understand the Committee's position that they want to hear from the public, the public has not learned anything new since the start of the hearing tour and without information from this Committee it is difficult for us to offer meaningful input on the redistricting process.

Providing opportunities for the public to give meaningful input is especially important here in the Greater Macon area, where people of color make up an increasingly large share of the population. As a result, many giving testimony today, especially people of color, have come forth with important information about their communities of interest for your consideration. The Committee should work to preserve those enumerated communities of interest, particularly communities of color, and respond to the public's questions, generate or publish redistricting guidelines, and respond to requests for public testimony options after the Census data is released.

I also want to raise two issues as we near the end of these summer town halls.

First, I understand that the Google form continues to be the only way to submit written comments and that there is no deadline yet for submitting comments—but there will be one. Can the Committee commit to giving the public at least two weeks' notice—via the website, email, press release—before you close down the Google form website for written comment?

Second, are concerns about the venue of the rescheduled Augusta town hall on August 30. Community members have raised concerns that the pathway from the parking lot into the venue presents difficulty to those with an ambulatory disability. Moreover, the venue is not

on a bus line and there are otherwise limited public transportation options to attend the hearing. As I understand it, community members have made this Committee aware of such issues, including through the submission of a petition, which recommends the hearing be moved to Augusta University's Maxwell Theatre and Auditorium, 2500 Walton Way or Augusta Technical College Information Technology Center Auditorium, 3200 Augusta Tech Drive. Could the public get a commit