

PUBLIC TESTIMONY TIPS



1

PREPARE IN ADVANCE

Remember you will only have **two minutes**.

2

INTRODUCE YOURSELF

Introduce yourself, your network, or any coalitions you work with or represent.

3

BE CLEAR

Be clear on goals, letting the audience know exactly why you are there.

TELL YOUR STORY

Tell your story, including how your community has been impacted by redistricting

4

BE SPECIFIC

Ask for a specific solution, including how your community is helped.

INTRODUCE YOUR COMMUNITY

Keeping “communities of interest” (people who have the same political or other interests) together is critical for communities that have historically been denied access to the democratic process.

5

6

TIP: Ask yourself: How do you define your community? What makes your neighborhood unique? What are the reasons they should keep your specific community together? Are there geographic boundaries that help paint a picture?

Anyone can
make a public
comment; no
special qualifications
are needed.

**DID
YOU
KNOW?**

Public Comment Example 1

The following is an example of a public comment you might adapt, keeping in mind include specific examples from your community.

My name is [INSERT NAME]. I am a resident of [INSERT CITY/TOWN], NC in [INSERT COUNTY NAME]. For decades, members of my community and I have been working to ensure that voter protections are secured for all people. That has especially meant Black residents, who have historically been denied access to the democratic process, and face continued attempts to weaken our political power.

I am speaking to express concern that the criteria adopted by the redistricting committee does not comply with the Voting Rights Act. This criteria does not allow for any consideration of racial data while drawing the maps. But given population changes reflected in the 2020 Census, race must be given proper consideration.

As you know, according to 2020 Census data, North Carolina's population increased to 10,439,388, reflecting a growth of 9.5 percent over the last decade, granting North Carolina an extra congressional seat. In addition:

- **More than 78% of North Carolina's population** growth occurred in its two largest metro areas, while more than half of the state's 100 counties lost population
- **8 of the existing 13** congressional districts show increases in Black population
- **66 of the existing state House** seats show increases in Black population
- **26 of the existing state Senate** seats show increases in Black population
- Black voting-age population increased in 130 congressional & statewide districts
- **33 NC counties increased** in Black voting-age population
- In several counties, growth in the Black population was significant, including Wake, Mecklenburg, Guilford, Buncombe, and Forsyth

Given these increases, racial data cannot be ignored completely. Race must have proper consideration to be in accord with the tenets of the Voting Rights Act and to accurately reflect the voting population of our state.



If you or your community may be impacted, public comments amplify your voice!

Public Comment Example 2

The following is an example of a public comment you might adapt, keeping in mind include specific examples from your community.

Good afternoon. My name is [INSERT NAME]. I am a resident of [INSERT CITY/TOWN], NC in [INSERT COUNTY NAME]. I am here today, representing [INSERT NAME OF COMMUNITY GROUP/ORGANIZATION]. I am writing to express concern for, both, the process for public comment and some of the criteria the redistricting committee has adopted for map-making.

First, though I am glad to be here in person, others in my community chose not to be, out of concern for their health and safety in light of the ongoing pandemic. Only 13 hearings are being held, in 10 out of 100 counties. There is limited opportunity for online participation. And no plan has been announced for comments after maps are presented. This is not in line with the spirit of full participation in the democratic process.

Secondly, the committee has adopted criteria that does not allow for any consideration of race while drawing the maps. Given the significant population increases in non-white communities in our state, to ignore race completely would violate the tenets of the Voting Rights Act.

I urge the committee to reconsider this criteria. I also urge you to lay out a plan for public comment after maps have been presented.

The public has a legal right to provide input on certain proposed government actions



Public Comment Example 3

The following is an example of a public comment you might adapt, keeping in mind include specific examples from your community.

My name is [INSERT NAME]. I am a resident of [INSERT CITY/TOWN], NC.

Our state has grown significantly over the last 10 years. As a result, we have gained a 14th congressional seat. Given its rapid population growth, that additional district should be located in or around Wake County. And because North Carolinians vote roughly 50-50 between the major parties, a fair map should include competitive districts that would mean the parties could each elect 7 representatives.

The committee should also avoid unnecessary geographic divisions that have happened in the past. Specifically:

- the committee should reunite the Sandhills into a single district;
- Johnston and Hanover counties should be united;
- Buncombe County should remain in its current configuration, instead of being split from the rest of the mountain region as it was in 2011 and 2016;
- Winston-Salem and Greensboro should be united, and Guilford county should be protected from any unnecessary splits.

I urge the committee to consider all of these factors while drawing the maps, and avoid placing political advantage at the center. This year's redistricting process gives an opportunity to produce maps that truly reflect the populations and voting patterns of North Carolinians.



*This document is inspired by resources created by various partners, including CHARGE, Fair Vote, Southern Coalition for Social Justice, All on the Line, ASO Communications, and Alabama Forward. Some aspects have been modified by The North Carolina Black Alliance.

For Redistricting training and resources visit our website
www.NCBlackAlliance.org/CODE-Red