

# 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.

5

## 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.

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 around the lack of transparency regarding the criteria being used in this process. But given population changes reflected in the 2020 census, we must ensure that the criteria considers several factors, including race, to ensure NC communities remain the priority”.

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
- Since 2010 our Black population of North Carolina has **grown by 4.3%** and **comprises 20%** of the State’s population
- **In over 40 counties in North Carolina, the Black population exceeds 20%**
- Statewide, from the 2020 Census, **60%** of North Carolina’s residents **identified as White, 20% as Black or African American, and 11% as Hispanic or Latinx.**
- **Less than 30 of the 120 members** of the NC House are persons of color, and roughly **10 of the 50 members** of the North Carolina Senate are persons of color.
- In several counties, **growth in the Black population** was significant, including Wake, Mecklenburg, Guilford, Buncombe, and Forsyth

The criteria used in this process must be reflective of 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 the lack of knowledge the community has had around criteria used.

Although 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 3 hearings are being held this week when there are 100 counties in this state. This is a clear indication that transparency and opportunity for true engagement were not the priority. This completely contradicts the democratic process the people of NC deserve.

We need details regarding the criteria used for this process. This process cannot be deemed equitable without transparency.

I urge the committee to be more transparent and intentional about making sure this process is informed by the people.

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. Because of this, the committee needs to ensure that they avoid unnecessary geographic divisions that we've seen in the past, such as:

- 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 make sure that they avoid placing political advantage at the center of this process. We need maps that truly reflect the populations and voting patterns of NC.

Understanding  
key terms can  
help you better  
understand the  
redistricting  
process.



# Public Comment Key Terms

## COMMUNITY OF INTEREST

A community of interest is a neighborhood, community, or group of people with common policy concerns that would benefit from being maintained in a single district. Another way of understanding a community of interest is simply a way for a community to tell its own story about what neighbors share in common and what makes it unique compared to surrounding communities. They are defined by the local community members.

## PACKING

“Packing” is concentrating many voters of one type into a single electoral district to reduce their influence in other districts.

## CRACKING

“Cracking” involves spreading voters of a particular type among many districts in order to deny them a sufficiently large voting bloc in any particular district.



\*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](http://www.NCBlackAlliance.org/CODE-Red)