TESTIMONY OF
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THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON REDISTRICTING AND ELECTIONS
521 HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
TUESDAY JUNE 21, 2011 9 A.M.

To the Committee through the Chair, Hon. Peter J. Lund,

The Committee may wish to continue with the important process of redistricting by articulating the redistricting principles it follows. We need to know your redistricting principles, *e.g.*, compactness, contiguity, no splitting precincts, so that we can incorporate those traditional redistricting principles in the alternative redistricting plans we will be proposing. Those principles should include transparency, fairness, and compliance with the Voting Rights Act and with Equal Protection.

You should ensure "one person one vote." You should redistrict in a way that avoids minority vote dilution.

- You should be careful to avoid: *packing* which is drawing district lines so that the minority population is over-concentrated or "packed" into election districts.
- You should also be careful to avoid *cracking* (or "fracturing") which is drawing district lines so that an area of concentrated minority population, which is large enough for separate representation in that it could constitute one or more majority minority or majority-black districts, is divided and spread among several districts that are predominantly white.
- You should be careful to avoid *stacking* which is drawing district lines so that a large minority population concentration is included with a larger white population with the purpose or effect of depriving minority voters of a voting majority. Stacking most classically happens in the creation or redistricting of multi-member districts, although it can occur in the redistricting of single-member districts. We also respectfully request that you avoid drawing plans that erode minority rights relative to the status quo, that is, that you avoid creating retrogressive redistricting plans.

A key traditional redistricting principle is respect for communities of interest. These are defined by three characteristics:

- the extent to which non-members identify members as a distinct community;
- the extent to which members identify themselves as a distinct community; and
- the extent to which members are similarly affected by governmental action.

Black citizens form one of the strongest communities of interest in the State of Michigan and the redistricting plan should have as a priority the fashioning of districts that accord appropriate representation to communities of interest.

Parenthetically, what federal financial assistance does Michigan currently receive and from what federal agencies or departments? As you know, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, along with other federal laws, prohibits entities that receive federal funding from discriminating based on race or national origin.

We ask that as part of the transparency and increased community access to the process that the Committee provide interested community members with access to the State's redistricting software or on-line system and, of course, training for members to use that mapping system. We request that you indicate the terminals that will be available to the community and when they will be available. We also request a schedule of the remainder of the redistricting process.

In closing, I respectfully ask that you contact Ms. Yvonne White, President, Michigan State Conference, regarding potential additional opportunities for community access to the redistricting process, and we look forward to receiving the requested information. We appreciate your assistance.

Yours for Civil Rights,

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