

Legislative Committees on Redistricting

Subject: Congressional District 3 Boundaries

September 13th, 2021

Honorable Chairs Salinas and Taylor, and members of the Committees on Redistricting,

Thank you for holding hearings to hear what my community vision and needs are for Oregon's redistricting process. My name is Alex Riedlinger, I've been a resident of East Portland, North Portland, and Northeast Portland for 25 years.

I have submitted this testimony along with a group of my colleagues from the Immigrant Refugee Community Organization and our extended community. IRCO is a culturally responsive non-profit that provides a wide array of direct services and community development for Oregon's immigrant and refugee populations. Our organization and extended communities are culturally, racially, ethnically, linguistically, and religiously diverse. Over decades, IRCO has cultivated an environment in which diverse communities with distinct needs can seek direct support and advocacy. As an organization, we serve the greater Portland area including East Portland, one of the regions I would like to bring attention to today.

I request that the commission maintain the inclusion of North Portland and East Portland in Congressional District 3, ensuring that our diverse and often marginalized members of North Portland, East Portland, and East County are well represented by lawmakers with local ties and shared interests. In my vision, these communities will receive as much support and economic opportunities as any other region in the greater Portland area. These diverse regions must remain in the same congressional district as the rest of Portland. This will ensure Black, Indigenous, people of color, immigrant, and refugee residents are not marginalized as voters, and that they hold power and agency over their congressional representation.

I grew up as a youth in East Portland in the Reynolds School District. When I first moved there, we were one of a handful of Black families. I watched as gentrification displaced Black residents, including African immigrants and refugees, from North and NE Portland, two historically Black areas that until recently saw little investment from policymakers. At the same time as this displacement, Portland became a resettlement and immigration hub transforming East Portland into a culturally rich, racially, ethnically, and politically diverse region.

Attentive and equitable political representation is vital for the success of many BIPOC immigrants and refugee residents in North Portland and East Portland facing gaps in access and services. The community lacks critical infrastructure investments that can create equitable living standards comparable to other parts of the Portland area.

I have seen firsthand the devastation Covid-19 has wrought on BIPOC, immigrant, and refugee communities. I am distraught over the deadly impacts of the Delta variant on under-vaccinated groups and the potential for mass evictions and families unable to pay back rent. I am frustrated by the institutional silence and public backlash to racial equity-based policies and police accountability. I am

overwhelmed by the elevation of youth and gun violence to daily occurrences and increased hate violence targeting protected classes and ethnic minorities. I am worried about our undocumented community members lacking immigration legal services, the health of farmworkers and laborers under wildfire and heatwave conditions, and the widespread effects of environmental racism.

I am not confident that if North Portland, East Portland, and East County were to be redrawn into another congressional district, that these issues, interests, and unique struggles will be well represented by neighboring lawmakers from politically, culturally, and geographically dissimilar districts. Therefore, I believe North Portland, East Portland, and East County communities, especially those that are Black, Indigenous, people of color, immigrants, and refugees, should be kept together for the reasons outlined.

I want to thank the Committee for their consideration in keeping my communities together.

Sincerely,

Alex Riedlinger

Congressional District 3

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