



March 15, 2021

Dear Chair Salinas, Chair Taylor, and members of the Redistricting Committees and staffers:

We Draw Oregon, the next phase of We Count Oregon, and community-based partners are concerned about how the redistricting process is unfolding. The hearing schedule appears to be politically motivated versus driven by a sincere interest in community insights. The schedule and potential use of alternative data undermine the democratic process we urgently need to catalyze trust and civic engagement. As we weather the final months of the pandemic, our communities are exhausted. We have not been given the time, or adequate information, to come together to develop reflections and recommendations on redistricting, which will govern our lives for a decade.

We understand that the Committees find themselves in a difficult position due to delays beyond your control and are striving to move the redistricting deadlines. That said, we are specifically concerned about:

- The false urgency generated by launching the public hearings seven months before census data is provided to the state with little public notice.
- The lack of a state-sponsored public information campaign clearly outlining the redistricting process and how to get involved.
- The lack of clarity about using alternative data to develop the maps and transparency about what that means at the community level.
- While the online hearings are increasing access for some, as we saw during the census campaign, digital-only events create barriers for rural folks, individuals with little to no connectivity, and those who lack comfort with technology.

In partnership with the Census Equity Funders Committee of Oregon (CEFCO), We Count Oregon, and numerous other stakeholders -- the state told our communities that being counted would lead to better representation, access to resources, and power -- specifically through the redistricting process. Now, this count we so ardently and righteously captured -- may not be used. The current process negates the entire census campaign, and if the Committees continue on this path, it is likely to erode the trust we are striving to build.

We urge the Committees to stop the public hearings and develop a public information campaign that clearly outlines Oregon's redistricting process. We recommend the state launch this campaign three months before the census data is available and give communities eight weeks to prepare once the census data is available to develop our testimony and community maps before attending formal hearings.

Sincerely,

We Draw Oregon