

Lafonda Grant

3/11/2021

RE: Redistricting

Co-Chairs Taylor, and Salinas, Vice-Chairs Knopp, and Boshart-Davis, and members of the 2redistricting committees,

For the record my name is Lafonda Grant, my pronouns are She/Her/Mom and I reside in SE Portland in the Powellhurst-Gilbert neighborhood. I live in Congressional District 3, and in House District 51 and Senate District 26.

I've lived in Portland for 37 years, 20 years of my life I lived in NE Portland and I now live in SE Portland due to rent increases and no cause evictions in NE. Throughout my time living in Portland I've noticed that people like me: Black/People of Color keep on being pushed to the sidelines and divided from their communities of interest. Gentrification in Portland keeps pushing our communities further towards Gresham.

One impact of gentrification is that Black people are pushed further away from the organizations, stores, and places that are important to us. My house of worship is located in NE Portland and it's a place that I have been attending for many years. Each year it gets smaller because people keep on being pushed out to SE Portland/Gresham where it's harder to access transportation. Before COVID we were down to about 10 members in our church which is a way smaller number than we had before when there was an average of 85 people who would attend, this saddens me because this place might close soon.

Living in Southeast Portland now, I've seen how much my community has changed in the past 7-8 years. It's getting harder to shop in my neighborhood when stores such as Safeway and Walgreens which were easily accessible, have disappeared. Our community needs transportation, homeless services and more. That's why I became a Census outreach worker, because I wanted to make sure that my neighborhood and community received the funding we need.

During these times of moves and shifts to my community, I often worried about my children's education because I know that it's important for kids to be on a solid foundation and I didn't want to constantly be moving them. My kids went to Arleta K-8, a school that had real challenges with cultural competence & overall staff representation doesn't mirror the students there. I joined a school committee so parents could support getting more people of color in school, however it's a process that's taken about 8 years. I am fully involved in the school as a parent because it's important to have representation. Because of my ingrained presence as a parent in this school district I know there's other ways to access data points while we wait for census results such as school lines and enrollment data.

I am testifying today because I believe that redistricting is highly important to me and the area I live in and I want to thank you all for your time and work.

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