

April 10, 2021

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

For the record my name is Cynthia Ramirez and my pronouns are she/her/ella. I live in Marion County, Congressional District 5. I have lived in North East Salem for 23 years and I am proud of my community. My community is powerful, lively, and full of culture. I live next to multiple panaderias and flea markets. The Lancaster Flea Market is a place where our community comes together to celebrate and embrace our culture. I love to see the Latinx community thrive with their small businesses and their enthusiasm to share our culture with the grander community. I remember attending Lunar New Year events with my best friend at our old middle school, Stephens Middle School. North east Salem is filled with so many beautiful people and cultures.

Growing up, I went to a majority Latinx and Asian American school. In middle school I remember teachers targeting BIPOC students, and providing little to no support to help us succeed. I felt ignored and as if I wasn't worth enough to put time and energy into. In high school I transferred to West Salem high school, and I experienced first hand the disparities between north salem and west salem. Schools in northeast are extremely under-funded, and that largely has to do with our community not being represented.

I was fortunate enough to take two classes at Willamette University that extremely impacted my life. I took a class on gerrymandering and learned how historically communities of color have been gerrymandered to make them the minority vote. Our communities are being sliced up because they know if the community could vote together, we would vote for our community and for real change. They do not want to see low income, minority communities take action and succeed.

I also learned how the prison population is being counted towards the population which then affects gerrymandering and voting. Inmates are being counted towards populations but cannot vote. I took a class inside the Oregon State Penitentiary with Prof Michaux with inmates who were majority Black, Latinx, and Indigenous. So it is fine that our communities are being counted for something they have no voice in?

We need our community to be seen and heard. I currently work with farm workers and working families and I've heard countless stories of them feeling ignored, underrepresented, and underappreciated. It is time for us to make a change with redistricting so our communities are being treated equally.

I hope to continue to work with this committee, to ensure that redistricting engages with the Latinx / communities of color and that it responds to our growing needs. The Legislature's process for engaging Oregon communities in redistricting is important and it is time for Oregon to make a monumental change for our communities of color.

Thank you very much for your time and work on this issue.