

**From:** [applications.administrator@capitol.local](mailto:applications.administrator@capitol.local)  
**To:** [Senate Redistricting](#)  
**Subject:** INETMAIL: Redistricting Public Input  
**Date:** Friday, March 24, 2023 9:46:29 AM

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Date: 2023-03-24  
First Name: Perna  
Last Name: Bhat  
Title: N/A  
Organization: Asian Texans for Justice  
[REDACTED]  
City: Leander  
State: Texas  
[REDACTED]

Affirm public info: I agree

Regarding: Senate

Message:

The census showed that 95% of all growth in Texas occurred in the African American, Latino, and AAPI communities. Any fair map must reflect the diversity of our state. The current draft maps do not allow any new opportunity district based on these census numbers in metroplexes, like Houston, Dallas, San Antonio, and Austin. Instead, they pack and crack our communities and dilute our votes. I urge this committee to comply with the Voting Rights Act and respect the reality of the new census by allowing people of color the opportunity to choose the candidates of their choice. As an Asian American, the fastest growing demographic in Texas, I want fair districts because we need better, more responsive representation and more opportunity districts for our communities, including in coalition with other people of color and immigrant populations with similar values and needs. During the winter storm, when our elected officials failed us, our communities showed up for each other. This was particularly impactful because many folks in these immigrant communities don't have adequate information on how to access services and aid, and most of our representatives don't put in sufficient effort to get us that information and reach out to AAPI communities. So we often have to organize and support each other on our own. During the storm and grid failure in February 2021, a South Asian civic organization that I am part of used our personal networks to help identify elderly folks in the area without water and/or electricity so that we could send aid or get them to somewhere safer. Folks who were lucky enough to not be as affected hopped on phone and text banks to check on those who might be. My mom put out a call for donations - of household items, groceries, water - among the South Asian community in her current neighborhood of Travisso, in Leander, as well as in the neighborhood that I grew up in, Canyon Creek in Northwest Austin. Our friends in Canyon Creek didn't even themselves have water for several days, so when we went to pick up items they had collected for donation, we also brought them gallons of water in repurposed milk jugs. Overall, through the generosity of these communities, we ended up collecting several van-fulls of donated items to help those in even more need get through a really tough time. These two neighborhoods, though only 15 minutes apart and part of the same, heavily AAPI community of interest in Northwest Austin, Cedar Park, and neighborhoods in Leander and Round Rock, are split apart in the majority of districts up and down the ballot. At least, though, Travisso and Canyon Creek were in the same state senate district, SD14. In these new maps, my neighborhood of Travisso is carved out from SD14, which has grown to 52.1% people of color, and thrown in with the new SD25, which is just 41% people of color. So I went from being in a state senate district that included my old neighborhood 15 minutes

away, to being in a district with folks 2 hours away in San Antonio, as well as voters in Kendall, Blanco, Comal, Hays, and Burnet Counties which are all very demographically distinct from my community. Furthermore, the temple that my family goes to 5 minutes away from our house, the Sai Baba temple on New Hope Drive, was in SD5 but is now included in the new SD24 map, which goes all the way up to Coryell County, all the way south to Atacosa County, but does not include the majority of folks who actually attend this temple. This is a primary religious and cultural center for the Hindu American community of North Greater Austin, where folks from the previous SD5, 14, and 24 all gather. Now we're additionally split between SD5, 14, 24, and 25. South Asian grocery stores Manpasand Indian Pakistani Halal Groceries and Gandhi Bazaar, located around the 183-620 intersection, are frequented by the South Asian community across these districts. These stores were in SD5, but were also carved out and included in SD24 under the new maps. Williamson County grew by 44% in the last decade and 77% of that growth came from diverse communities (including 26% from the Latino community, and 21% from the Asian community). The AAPI population in Travis County grew by 76.5% over the last decade. But these new maps crack these communities into far-off, rural, non-diverse districts. Our community was already divided as is, and these maps are maintaining and furthering the erasure of our voices district by district. They serve only to dilute our votes. For far too long, AAPI communities of interest across Texas have been unfairly divided into multiple legislative districts and thus, have been prevented from having the ability to elect a candidate of their choice. Racism has driven the maps that we currently have. In 2011, Texas drew election maps that intentionally discriminated against people of color. I urge this committee to hold additional in-person and virtual hearings that allow public input from the entire state and to create a new Senate map that reflects our community input and the census data, as well as create fair districts for US Congress and TX House. In addition, please continue to allow a fair and open process by providing at least 14 days for the public to review additional maps, 5 days to review any changes to proposed maps, keeping a record of all documents, written communications, emails, text messages and draft maps, and providing analysis of how the new maps impact historically disenfranchised communities of color.

