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AUGUST 9, 2021  
HAYS, KANSAS

Members of the House and Senate Redistricting Committees:

My name is Martha Terhaar; I am the Southwest Kansas Thriving Advocate for the Kansas Appleseed Center for Law and Justice, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to the belief that Kansans, working together, can build a state full of thriving, inclusive, and just communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. We strongly believe that redistricting should be an unbiased, nonpartisan process that ensures every Kansan has their vote counted equally.

Western Kansas is a diverse community, full of people with diverse backgrounds and demographics. Equal representation for communities of color matters. It is vitally important not to dilute the voting power of communities of interest. We need to work together to make sure every community is being represented.

Unfortunately, we saw first hand in our work to encourage Census participation how immigrant communities were sometimes left out and left behind. I urge you to make sure that does not happen again during redistricting.

A good way to ensure that no one in Hays is left out is to make the process accessible to everyone. Providing interpreters for those who don't speak or hear English would be a good start. Making materials available in well-translated Spanish would also help. Community meetings should be at times accessible by working people. Let's make this process as transparent and accessible as possible.

Thank you for your time and your engagement today. I urge you to listen to as many people as you can, and really consider the input you hear, especially from people whose life experiences may be different than yours. A good redistricting process will require both empathy and an understanding of the full range of diverse communities that make up this great state. We are all Kansans. Let's make sure everyone's vote has equal power.

Martha Terhaar  
SWKS Thriving Advocate  
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