



August 10, 2021

To: House & Senate Joint Committees on Redistricting
From: Brenda R. Sharpe, President and CEO, REACH Healthcare Foundation
Re: Written-Only Testimony for Thursday, August 12 in Overland Park

Dear Redistricting Committee Members:

Thank you for establishing an initial schedule for town hall meetings beginning this week. These public events are essential to hear from Kansans about the redistricting process and how redistricting impacts representation within their communities. While this week's schedule is a good start, additional opportunities with adequate public notice will enable more residents to weigh in.

The REACH Healthcare Foundation's service area encompasses Johnson, Wyandotte and Allen counties – areas that are diverse in their populations, interests and needs. Our mission is ensuring equitable access to quality health care. Central to our mission is consumer engagement regarding federal and state policies so that residents' interests and concerns are acknowledged and considered by policy makers. For this reason, the foundation is keenly interested in fairness and transparency throughout the redistricting process.

We ask that legislators keep in mind basic principles of an effective process:

1. We urge legislators to make public right away the plans and timeline for additional public input regarding redistricting – and to accommodate multiple modes for providing input.
2. We urge legislators to commit to contiguity in drawing maps so that communities of interest with shared racial, cultural and economic concerns have a meaningful voice in selecting the leaders who represent them. Our work in Johnson and Wyandotte counties has shown us that these areas together represent a distinct community of interest.
3. We urge legislators to commit to a process that does not split communities in ways that undermine the power of minority voters to elect candidates of their choice.
4. We urge legislators to allow residents to ask questions both before and after initial maps are drawn.
5. Furthermore, we ask legislators to give careful, unrelenting attention to the drafting of maps that avoid partisan advantage to any one party or to specific candidates.

Finally, the REACH Foundation calls on the Redistricting Committees to make clear the criteria and timelines by which they will abide. Laying out the process will increase people's confidence in their government and the elected officials tasked with drawing district lines.

Our foundation will continue to be a champion for public engagement in the process, and stands ready to assist lawmakers in achieving fairness throughout.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Brenda R. Sharpe".

Brenda R. Sharpe