

Senator Kevin C. Kelly, 21st Senatorial District, Co-Chairman
Representative Gregg Haddad, 54th Assembly District, Co-Chairman.

September 13, 2021

Dear Senators Kelly and Haddad, and members of the Reapportionment Committee.

Thank you for serving on the Reapportionment Committee.

We members of Progressive Women of Greater Hartford (ProWo) believe that creating districts that are reflective and representative of the electorate is a basic tenet of democracy. Our grassroots group is made up of about seventy women ranging in ages from 30 to 80+, representing seven towns in the Greater Hartford area. We have been meeting monthly since 2018 to educate ourselves and others, express our opinions about state and local policy, and network and collaborate with other members of our communities.

We understand that public engagement was limited in earlier redistricting initiatives. Well, we want you to know: we are now engaged. Our members have been watching the process very closely and have been reading about and discussing Connecticut's redistricting process.

We appreciate the complexity of your responsibility. Sometimes when something is so complex, it is understandable to want to work among yourselves behind closed doors.

We ask you to change this closed door mindset. We believe a more open process will ultimately strengthen the final result.

It is difficult for us citizens to form opinions about the viability of new district lines if we lack some specific insights. We'd like to share with you our wish list of insights and information we are looking for in the hopes that this will strengthen our own engagement and that of other citizens.

1/ Improve your website as a basic tool for engagement.

While we appreciate all of the excellent resource material you have provided on your website, we ask that your website be expanded to include additional substantive information presented with plain language.

- Include your thoughts on what criteria you are currently considering.
- Summarize what conversations you have been having internally about redistricting.
- Summarize current trends impacting redistricting.
- Post suggested maps that have been provided by constituents, and offer your reactions.
- Allow citizens to send in comments via the website.

2/ Let the public know about the important work you are doing! You and your work are important, yet there is little publicity of your work in the news or on social media. We wish we could see more media attention. We wish we could read or hear a statement from each of you with substantive information on what is important to you and the issues that need to be addressed. Let the public know the factors that are being taken into consideration and how redistricting affects every citizen.

3/ Be more transparent about criteria for drawing lines.

We look forward to seeing draft maps. Along with the maps, let us know what specific considerations were used to create them. Answer specific questions, such as, what were the most challenging decisions? How did you decide which districts will be above and which will be lower than the ideal population? How should the new law requiring state prisoners to be reallocated to “homes of record” be implemented?

While we understand that you are working under a time crunch, we still believe that a little creativity and a stronger focus on communication will vastly improve our understanding of the complicated processes and our ability to work with you as partners in this initiative. The more we citizens can engage with you, the more successful we can be in creating district lines that will allow every citizen’s vote to be counted.

We look forward to engaging with you during this very important process.

Sincerely,

Jane Zande
on behalf of Progressive Women of Greater Hartford
West Hartford, CT