



**Testimony of Brenda Murphy
President
South Carolina State Conference of the NAACP**

**Before the South Carolina House of Representatives
Redistricting Ad Hoc Committee**

Testimony on Proposed Congressional Redistricting Maps

December 29, 2021

Good morning, Chair Jordan and Committee members. My name is Brenda Murphy, and I am the President of the South Carolina State Conference of the NAACP, which I will refer to as the “South Carolina NAACP.” As I have mentioned, we are a state conference of 77 branches and over 13,000 members throughout the state. Indeed, our members and the constituents that the South Carolina NAACP serves live and are registered voters in each of South Carolina’s seven congressional districts; therefore, their equal access to representatives of their choice and their ability of to elect their preferred candidates to South Carolina’s delegation to the U.S. House of Representatives are vitally important to the South Carolina NAACP.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify about this Committee’s proposed Congressional redistricting maps. Once again, I am providing these brief remarks on behalf of the association that I lead and a coalition that includes the South Carolina NAACP, the NAACP Legal Defense Fund (or “LDF”), the ACLU, and the ACLU of South Carolina. Longer, more detailed comments from our coalition were also sent to this Committee’s email address this morning.

Unfortunately, this Committee’s proposed Congressional maps are flawed in several material ways. The recently proposed House “alternative” map is especially concerning. It dilutes Black voting strength across the state and harms *all* voters in at least two ways. First, it consolidates the political power of non-Black voters *everywhere* except South Carolina’s lone majority-Black district and the only Congressional district with a Black representative, which is CD 6. Second, it all but ensures that CD 1 is uncompetitive politically and, in so doing, harms Black voters. To understand these grave problems, I’ll briefly discuss the two other maps under consideration by the South Carolina Legislature and explain why this “alternative” map is *unacceptably* more of the same.

I. The Senate’s Initial Congressional Redistricting Proposal

The Senate was the first body to propose a Congressional map during this cycle. It is important to recall that the Senate’s map was widely condemned, including by the South Carolina NAACP, for several reasons relevant to the alternative House map.

First, the Senate’s map ended CD 1’s status as a competitive district where all voters would have a meaningful opportunity to have a say in who wins the general election for that seat.

Second, and relatedly, the Senate’s map cracks Black voters in several key areas. For example, it cracks Black communities in Charleston and North

Charleston—where Black voters in these important parts of our state are a cohesive community of interest because of a shared economy and job market, shared media, and other factors. It also splits Black communities in Sumter. And it makes Fort Jackson part of CD 2, breaking apart Black communities in northwest Richland County from neighboring communities of Black voters to do so.

Third, the Senate’s proposed map impairs Black voters’ ability to elect candidates of their choice or meaningfully influence elections in *every* district outside of CD 6. As you know, our coalition proposed maps on October 8, nearly 3 months ago, as did other groups, showing that minimizing Black political power outside of CD 6 was not only unnecessary; it is harmful. As we’re nearly 30% of the voters in our state, we expect to have our voices heard in more than just one district out of seven.

Fourth, *no* district in the Senate’s proposal has a majority Black voting-age population, even though our coalition and others proposed maps showing how to add more voters to CD 6, a severely underpopulated district, while also retaining CD 6 as a hard-won majority-Black district, respecting communities of interest, and following other criteria.

Because of these issues and others, the Senate promised to incorporate feedback and make improvements.

II. The House’s Initial Congressional Redistricting Proposal

Then, the House’s proposed its initial map, which made improvements over the Senate’s in some ways. It restored CD 6 as a majority-Black district. It increased the Black population in CD 1, so CD 1—incredibly—no longer had the lowest Black voting population of all seven Congressional districts. And it corrected the split of Black voters in Sumter. Still, that initial House map fell short in several ways.

First, it, too, made sure that CD 1 would *not* be politically competitive. Second, it continued to split Black communities seemingly for partisan advantage and to protect incumbents. For example, Charleston County was cut into pieces to put more Black voters in CD 6. But we had told the South Carolina Legislature, as did other groups, that cohesive Black communities in Charleston and North Charleston do *not* need to be split to comply with “one person, one vote” principle or the Voting Rights Act. And they certainly should not be cracked apart to minimize Black voting strength.

The initial House map also breaks part of Richland County into CD 5, even though no meaningful community of interest exists between CD 5 and Richland County. If this body respects communities of interest, there are more reasons to pair northern Richland with Lexington than with Charlotte suburbs, which anchor CD 5.

Additionally, the House's initial proposed Congressional map split Berkeley County between CD 1 and CD 6, carving out historically Black areas on the East side of Berkeley County to place them needlessly in CD 6.

III. The House's "Alternative" Congressional Redistricting Map

This brings us to last week—December 22, two days before Christmas eve. That's when the House released its "alternative" Congressional map. Unfortunately, this map repeats *many* of the same problems as the Senate's proposal. For one, it reduces BVAP in CD 6 to below a majority. Adopting it would make *none* of South Carolina's Congressional districts have a Black majority, even though Black voters are 29% of the voting-age population.

And like the Senate and initial House proposals, the alternative map continues to split Black communities and prevent competitive elections, harming *all* voters. To dilute Black voting strength in CD 1 and other districts, it makes largely the same cuts through Black communities in Richland County, and the same cuts through Sumter, as the flawed Senate proposal. It also continues to separate much of Charleston from North Charleston, and it appears to follow racial lines in its splits of Dorchester and Berkeley Counties.

In short, *both* the initial and alternative House proposals fail to reflect the voting strength of Black South Carolinian voters, particularly outside of CD 6. And both House maps erase what could be, and what has been shown to be, a politically competitive Congressional district in South Carolina, cracking Black communities to achieve that end.

In closing, we urge you to amend these maps—and to seriously consider the two Congressional plans our coalition submitted in October. Both of our plans correct for population imbalance between CD 1 and CD 6 and other districts, without denying Black South Carolinians an equal voice in this state's Congressional elections.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide these comments today and look forward to working with you for all the people of South Carolina. Thank you.