



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Asian American Institute Concerned About New State District Maps

Chicago, IL - The Asian American Institute, a member of the Asian American Center for Advancing Justice, is dismayed to see the fragmentation of Asian American neighborhoods in the north side of Cook County by the new district lines that the Illinois House and Senate passed late last week.

"We've shown that it's possible to draw strong Asian American influence districts with little to no fragmentation of Asian American neighborhoods," noted Tuyet Le, Asian American Institute's executive director. "While we are encouraged by how the districts were drawn around Chinatown, we are disappointed about the districts in northern Cook County. We urge Governor Quinn to not pass the maps until they sufficiently protect the voting rights of Asian communities and other minorities." Through its repeated submissions to the House and Senate redistricting committees, AAI demonstrated that it is possible to draw optimized Asian American influence districts on the north side that take race as well as other socioeconomic factors and community preferences into consideration-including a Senate district composed of over 25% Asian Americans and two House districts of over 25% Asian Americans. In the new maps passed by the Illinois House and Senate, one north side Senate district is 23% Asian and two House districts have 20% and 25% Asians respectively, yet these district lines fracture the clusters that AAI and numerous community organizations repeatedly identified as communities of interest.

"I'm dismayed at the new lines and implore the General Assembly to take another careful look at the fragmentation of our community in the north side of Chicago," said Ahlam Jbara, acting director of the Council of Islamic Organizations of Greater Chicago. "Our community has grown tremendously and we've worked incredibly hard at increasing our voter registration, turnout, and overall civic engagement. The new lines shatter our community and dilute our votes; we deserve to have our voices heard by legislators who feel truly accountable to our community."

"The Asian American population in Illinois has increased nearly 40% over the last decade and the legislators should have been more mindful of the fast growing community's legal right to have votes that count. During the recent passage of the Illinois Voting Right Act, the legislature recognized the need to protect Asian American neighborhoods during redistricting, yet they have provided no explanation for why they fragmented Asian American neighborhoods on the north side," said Ami Gandhi, AAI's legal director.

After years of public outcry about the severe fragmentation of Chinatown, the new map puts most of Chinatown into one Illinois House and one Illinois Senate District. "This change will go a long way towards helping our community achieve a stronger voice in government," said Theresa Mah, policy consultant for the Coalition for A Better Chinese American Community.

AAI has been working in coalition with United Congress of Community and Religious Organizations (UCCRO), Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), and others to draw strong Asian American influence districts that keep the Asian American community together and also respect the voting rights of Latinos and African Americans. AAI's redistricting testimonies, maps, and demographic analyses can be found on its website at aai.advancingjustice.org.

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The Asian American Institute (www.aaichicago.org) is one of the leading pan-Asian nonprofit organizations in the Midwest, dedicated to empowering the Asian American community through advocacy, by utilizing research, education, and coalition-building. Asian American Institute, Asian American Justice Center, Asian Law Caucus, and the Asian Pacific American Legal Center are members of the Asian American Center for Advancing Justice.

