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Written testimony of The Reverend Jesse L. Jackson, Sr. – May 27, 2011

Good afternoon Chairman Raoul and distinguished members of the Illinois Senate Committee on Redistricting.

It is with deep regret that I am not able to be present before you today to offer this testimony in fervent support of the proposed map as described in House Amendment # 2 to Senate Bill 1177.

Briefly, the proposed map, as I understand it, creates 20 House Districts (5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 38, 78, 80, 114) and 8 Senate Districts (3, 4, 5, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17) where African Americans will have “effective” opportunities to elect candidates of their choice. I am pleased with the number of effective opportunity districts here given the African-American population loss in Chicago and Cook County.

I am encouraged to say that though House Districts 7 and 114 do not have African-American voting age populations over 50%, it appears that they were drawn that way in part because of the fact that white citizens in those areas have demonstrated a strong propensity to vote for black candidates. And, as the founder of PUSH (People United to Serve Humanity) back in 1971, this is one of those moments that we all should pause and reflect upon this tangible result of “social change” – that is, districts are being drawn amplifying the reality that whites are voting for black candidates as their candidates of choice.

The proposed map also creates 2 House districts (78 and 80) where African Americans (the predominant numerical group in each) along with Hispanics have voting age populations over 40% in both districts. This too should be celebrated as the legislature in its wisdom has recognized, affirmed and put forward the notion that two different minority groups could form an alliance and have an effective opportunity to elect the candidate of their choice.

Lastly, Rainbow/PUSH as a member of African Americans for Legislative Redistricting (AALR) applauds that the proposed map contains 5 influence districts - 3 House (67, 92 and 96) and 2 Senate (40 and 57) where African Americans have the opportunity to influence the outcomes of elections. Especially important to note here is House District 96, which is brand new, and resembles one of the districts AALR submitted in its proposal. This particular district contains both the cities of Springfield and Decatur where the African-American population is large enough in the district to influence who will actually win that particular seat.

In closing, the proposed map is demonstrative of the multi-racial, multi-issue and progressive society that we are forging here in Illinois, and I therefore urge the members of this committee to vote in favor of House Amendment # 2 to Senate Bill 1177.