

TESTIMONY ON REDISTRICTING

Centro Romero is a community-based not-for-profit organization that serves the communities of Edgewater, Rogers Park, and Uptown on the northeast side of Chicago. From volunteer efforts of Salvadoran immigrants arriving in the city in the early 1980s, Centro Romero was founded in 1984 to meet the needs of the rapidly increasing Latino immigrant and refugee populations. The mission of Centro Romero is to provide opportunities for those community residents with the fewest options. Through education, advocacy, and service, Centro Romero emphasizes the development of the whole family unit, the creation of community leadership, and self-reliance. The agency realizes its mission with programs that provide essential supportive services for the healthy personal and social development of participants and their families. In 2010, with the help of 417 volunteers who provided 17,763 service hours, we served 15,243 persons in four programs and a cross-program project.

The Youth Program served 238 children, youth, and their parents. Seventy-one youngsters between the ages of six through 17 attended the intensive after-school program that includes academic support, tutoring, recreational and cultural activities

The Women's Program served 6,297 persons in the Women's Program. The Domestic Violence Project served 136 women with individual counseling, court advocacy, and support groups. In the Immigrant Family Resource Project, we assisted 1,149 individuals with language barriers to receive public assistance and case counseling on health and human service issues and enrolled 1,959 children in the public insurance and nutrition programs for children. We also educated 2,252 persons on the importance of preventive health care measures and the availability of health care services through organizing community education projects, seminars, workshops, and health fairs. In the Women's Leadership Project, we provided leadership development, including community organizing training, to 43 Latinas. We also trained 396 Latina girls and women as HIV peer educators.

The Legal Services Program provided over 12,500 hours of service by the staff attorney, one full BIA accredited representative, and two partial BIA accredited representatives, a paralegal aide, law student interns, and volunteers to 7,192 clients with immigration and naturalization issues

The Adult Education Program served 998 persons. We instructed 728 adults in courses including English as a Second Language (ESL), 50 in Spanish literacy, 70 in General Educational Development (GED), and 150 adults attended the Citizenship Preparation Project.

This work does not happen in the absence of political representation. The Latino as well as other immigrant communities deserves political representation and maintaining groups of Latinos and Asians in 1 Senate district has allowed for an immigrant voice to emerge. Even though the numbers have not increased significantly in some areas, these districts are still the home base for many immigrants - where they come to shop, see family, and worship

Centro Romero is working with other coalition across ethnic and racial lines (African Americans, Latinos, Asians, and Muslims) to build coalitions that keep communities of interest together

We are more than willing to provide real community input into the process of how any changes on electoral districts will impact our community. We would like to see and have input into the

maps that the leaders are drawing. Specifically, there should be hearing such as this one this morning with the proposed map so that the communities have adequate time to respond.

Once again I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify and look forward to continue working with the legislature as this process continues. Thank you

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