

[add any necessary thanks for chair or committee members]

As Minority Leader of the Georgia State Senate, I recognize that fair maps are crucial to ensuring that every Georgian's vote counts equally. Gerrymandering suppresses the voices and votes of the Georgians that it disadvantages.

Unfortunately, the proposal offered by the majority, and the process by which the majority appears intent on approving it today, falls far short of a fair map or a fair and transparent process.

The majority seems intent on allowing Georgians less than 72 hours to review and provide feedback on a map that will affect their lives for the next decade. The majority's proposal was publicly released Tuesday night as polls were closing and election results came in, and while the Braves were clinching a World Series win. Go Braves!

The only thing that prevents this Committee from slowing down and providing the public greater opportunity to engage on the Majority's proposal and to allow the Committee to consider other proposals, like the Senate Democratic Caucus's proposal I will discuss shortly, and others the public may present, is the Majority's unwillingness to do so.

Yes, the Governor set the start date of the special session for November 3. But he did not set an end date. We should take due time to provide Georgians a meaningful opportunity to engage in the redistricting process. The redrawing of districts is occurring NOW. Georgians deserve adequate time NOW to engage in that process. Moving any Senate map, including the one I am about to present, out of this Committee today is simply unacceptable and an insult to Georgians.

Before I turn to discuss the Senate Democratic Caucus's proposal, it is first critical to understand the backdrop against which it is offered and against which the entire redistricting process operates. Doing so requires understanding where Georgia is today as a state and who Georgians are today.

As the Chair has noted, population change drives redistricting. And over the last decade Georgia's population has grown by one million people. But population change is not simply a number. Each of these one million people are Georgians, and we cannot ignore who those Georgians are. The entirety of the growth over the last decade is a result of growth in the number of minority residents. The non-Hispanic White population in Georgia declined between 2010 and 2020.

As I speak today, Georgia is most likely already a majority-minority state. As of April 2020, as measured by the 2020 Census, Georgia was only 50.1% non-Hispanic White. Over the last decade, and the decade before that, Georgia's growth has been driven by Black, Hispanic, and Asian Georgians, and other

Georgians of color. Every map the General Assembly passes in this Special Session must reflect that reality.

Every map the General Assembly passes must also recognize that Georgia is not only becoming more diverse, but also more urban. The majority of the State's growth over the last decade has occurred in Metro Atlanta.

Let me turn now to discussing the Senate Democratic Caucus's proposal. And before we discuss individual districts, I want to discuss the proposal as a whole. As an initial matter, as the Chairman noted yesterday, this map is labeled Draft Georgia Senate Districts. We bring this proposal to this committee not as a final, finished product, but rather as a strong starting point. A strong starting point to engage with members of the majority on this Committee, but more importantly, to engage with Georgians on this proposal.

As the Chair made clear yesterday, until a map is introduced by a member in this Committee, it will not be considered by this Committee. Therefore, the Democratic Caucus went through the process of taking its proposal to the reapportionment office, turning it into a bill, and introducing it so we can do exactly what we're doing today – BEGINNING the conversation.

Never did we imagine that little more than 48 hours after the start of Special Session this Committee would consider voting out a proposal that Georgians have

had for less than 72 hours. And it should not do so. It cannot do so without making a mockery of this process and the promises of fairness and transparency.

The Democratic Caucus wants to engage with the public and the majority on its proposals, but it cannot do so if this Committee effectively ends debate on Senate redistricting today. The Democratic Caucus remains open to proposed changes to its proposal that make it fairer and more representative of Georgians, particularly of Georgians of color who despite making up the majority of Georgians today, continue to be underrepresented in the General Assembly.

The Democratic Caucus is proud of the proposal it has put forth as a starting point. Quite frankly, it is a stronger and fairer starting point than the map presented by the Majority. I'm glad to see that the majority took some of the Caucus's ideas and incorporated it into its own proposal. However, the differences between the two proposals make all the difference in the world. And you do not have to take my word for it.

While some members of this Committee seemed eager to disparage the nonpartisan analysis put forth by the Princeton Gerrymandering Project, it provides a neutral scorekeeper to assess a proposal's fairness. I'm proud to say the Democratic Caucus's proposal received an overall A, as well as an A in Partisan Fairness. The Democratic Caucus certainly could have proposed a partisan gerrymandered map that advantaged it, but doing so would be unfair to Georgians. Unfortunately, the

majority's proposal received an overall F, an F in Partisan Fairness, and an F in Competitiveness. Where our two proposals scored the same was that both got a C in Geographic Features, which measures the compactness of districts and county splits.

And it was suggested by some members of this Committee that this nonpartisan scorekeeper is biased towards Democrats. As far as I can tell, its work is based solely on data. It is certainly not the be-all and end-all of redistricting evaluation, but it is a nonpartisan scorekeeper. You don't need to look any further than its website to find Democratic proposals elsewhere that receive lower grades, including an F. And the same organization gave a better grade, a C, to the majority's congressional proposal. While a map that gets a C is certainly not as good as a map that gets an A or a B, it's better than a map that gets a failing grade.

I want to turn to the area in which our proposals received the same grade – geographic features. As noted by the Chair yesterday, the majority's proposal contains fewer county splits than our proposal – to be precise, seven fewer county splits. However, our proposal contains two fewer county splits than the existing map – a map drawn by the same majority party and a map which I have heard majority members of this Committee repeatedly praise. If the majority has suggestions on how to further reduce county splits in our proposal without

sacrificing fairness or representation of minority voters, I'd be glad to receive them.

And I think it is important to acknowledge where the splits that exist in the Majority's proposal occur. Unfortunately, the majority's proposal demonstrates a clear intent to split counties with significant minority populations with a majority of districts that are majority White. As examples:

- the majority's proposal splits Bibb County between three districts, two of which are majority white, while our proposal only splits it between two districts.
- the majority's proposal splits Chatham County between three districts, two of which are majority white, while our proposal only splits it between two districts;
- the majority's proposal splits Douglas County between three districts, two of which are majority white, whereas our proposal only splits it between two districts;
- the majority's proposal splits Henry County between three districts, two of which are majority white, whereas our proposal only splits it between two districts;

- the majority’s proposal splits Athens-Clarke County between two districts, both majority white, whereas our proposal keeps it whole in a single district.

The majority’s proposal does contain fewer split counties, but this only magnifies the importance of the specific county splits the majority chose to make. And the number of split counties is only one consideration in assessing a map, and far from the most important consideration.

Much more important considerations are whether a proposal discriminates against Georgians. Discrimination is abhorrent and should not be enacted into law – regardless of whether that discrimination is based on a Georgian’s political viewpoint, their skin color, or the language they speak.

Our proposal received an A in partisan fairness with a determination that neither political party obtains an unfair advantage. Unfortunately, the majority’s proposal received an F because it provides, and I quote, a “Significant Republican advantage.” This state is equally divided politically. A map that provides either party a significant partisan advantage discriminates against, and reduces the voting power of, Georgians with different political viewpoints. Georgians should be allowed to exercise their free speech rights without being discriminated against by the General Assembly.

Even more critically, Georgians should not be discriminated against based upon the color of their skin or the language they speak. Georgia’s voters of color must be

given an equal opportunity to elect their candidates of choice. Our proposal contains more majority-minority districts and more Black-majority districts than the majority's proposal. Put simply, it provides more opportunities for minorities to elect their candidates of choice.

As suggested by some of the commenters at yesterday's hearing, it may be possible to draw even more majority-minority and Black-majority districts than we have in our proposal. And as I've stated, we want the opportunity to hear from all Georgians about our proposal and their suggestions for improving it. But we can only have that opportunity if this Committee does not shut the door today. So do not shut that door. Give Georgians the fair process they've asked for.

Let's turn now to the specific districts in our proposal . . .

