Dear XXXXXX,

I am writing to ask that the upcoming redistricting process for the State/County/City/School District acknowledges its LGBTQ+ residents as a community of interest.

LGBTQ+ people have been historically underrepresented in the halls of power and frequently denied access to key social institutions and support networks. Despite rising acceptance of LGBTQ+ people, the community continues to fight for basic civil rights while experiencing hate and discrimination that perpetuates disparities in health and wellbeing.

* HIV is criminalized in more than half of states, and gay and bisexual men are still restricted from donating blood, regardless of HIV-status.
* Transgender and gender nonconforming people have extraordinary difficulty accessing affirming healthcare and mental health services.
* Across the country, there have been hundreds legislative attempts and ballot measures (both successful and unsuccessful) to restrict or eliminate basic civil rights for LGBTQ+ people.
* This year alone, more than half of state legislatures across the country (28) are actively considering bills to restrict or eliminate basic civil rights for transgender people.

This systemic discrimination has created very specific policy needs with respect the advancement of LGTBQ+ individuals and it’s imperative that it be provided a unified voice in electoral decisions effecting our community in the decade ahead. While not included as a protected class under the Voting Rights Act, as that provision of federal law governing redistricting is reserved exclusively for racial minority communities, the LGBTQ+ community is a protected class under the Civil Right Act because of its vulnerability to discrimination. Furthermore, the tests applied to communities in the 1982 amendments to the Voting Rights Act very plainly characterize the LGBTQ+ experience as well:

* A history of official discrimination;
* Voting is polarized based on membership in a protected class;
* Group is discriminated against in socioeconomic areas, such as education, employment, and health;
* Political campaigns have featured overt or subtle appeals against the community;
* The extent to which the community’s votes as a cohesive voting bloc, often in contrast to the preferences of voters who do not belong to the community; and
* The degree that elected officials are unresponsive to the concerns of the minority group.

The State/County/City/School District would be well-served by the recognition of the LGBTQ+ community as an elevated community of interest in this redistricting plan to demonstrate the spirit of fairness and inclusion that is tantamount to this very important process for our democracy. Please consider the public testimony that will be shared with the Legislature/County Commissioners/City Council/School Board throughout this process. This testimony will include:

* Census block-level datasets detailing the concentration of the LGBTQ+ population within our State/County/City/School District;
* Maps prepared by community members who will present their definition of the geographic community of interest by noting the spaces and landmarks that allows the LGBTQ+ community to thrive; and
* Written or spoken testimony that community members will provide to better describe the interactions that the LGBTQ+ population has on a regular basis with businesses, services, residential neighborhoods, and other landmarks that are vital to our community.

Thank you for your consideration of our request, and we would very much appreciate the opportunity to make further presentations or to answer questions related to our community of interests for the purposes of being fairly represented in the decade ahead by the upcoming redistricting plan.

Sincerely,

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