

540 Fairview Ave N, Suite 209, St. Paul, MN 55104

February 21st, 2025

Minnesota House Elections Finance and Government Operations Committee,

The Asian American Organizing Project, whose mission is to build vibrant communities by empowering young Asian Minnesotans, stands in strong opposition to the proposed constitutional amendment, HF 550, regarding the creation of a bipartisan redistricting commission.

We are currently witnessing unprecedented and consequential actions from politicians at all levels of government. What we do not witness is the creation of spaces for community involvement in forging the future they desire. The creation of this bipartisan redistricting commission would not only further strip powers away from the people, and exclude opportunities for community involvement, but rather put it into the hands of politicians with very limited conflict of interest prohibitions.

We also oppose the placing of “communities of interest” near the bottom of the redistricting principles. This means that protecting communities of interest will be listed as one of the lowest priorities when creating maps for new districts. Not only will this impact them on an electoral and policy level, by attempting to dilute our community's voices, but will also impact them on a societal level, creating divisions and rifts within communities.

The Asian American Organizing Project has a strong interest in making sure our community members are not treated as an afterthought, but rather are involved in the decision making process. In 2019 - 2021, Asian American Organizing Project worked with other BIPOC leaderships to develop the Minnesota Census Communication and Mobilization Plans, outreached & engaged with youth & young Asian Minnesotans on the 2020 Census. We led various conversations with community members to create community of interest maps. These maps were part of a larger unity map that was submitted by the Corrie Plaintiffs, one of the four formal parties involved in the Special Redistricting Panel.

In terms of what we see as better, more positive alternatives, we need not look further than what has been introduced in the recent past. HF 4593 the With Us, For Us Redistricting Amendment bill came from the collective effort of BIPOC community organizations and best positions us in the model, process and rules. It establishes structures and access for youths and young people to continue to provide insights, community driven solutions and see ourselves in critical decision making spaces.

As an organization that's worked with youth and young Asian Minnesotans for almost 10 years, youth and young people want to be involved in shaping our future and democracy. With this in mind, we reiterate the fact that the Asian American Organizing Project stands in strong opposition to this proposed amendment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Vang Xor Xiong".

Vang Xor Xiong || Organizing & Partnership Director