

The Committee of 100

on the Federal City



April 28, 2022

Re: Testimony before the Council Committee of the Whole Subcommittee on Redistricting, Public Hearing, April 28, 2022, 10am, virtual, on Bill 24-700, the Advisory Neighborhood Commission Boundaries Act of 2022

The Committee of 100 seeks to sustain and safeguard the fundamental values of the L'Enfant and McMillan Plans that give the nation's capital much of its distinction, beauty and rich community character. Historic preservation is one of our focus areas. Our Historic Preservation Subcommittee is charged with presenting to government councils, commissions and other entities, through testimony and other means, the Committee of 100's position on various historic preservation matters.

This testimony today pertains to the recommendations of the Ward 3 Advisory Neighborhood Commission Redistricting Task Force, which have caused considerable turmoil. C100 believes that our neighborhoods and historic districts are important elements of our City's distinctive character and should not be weakened. A number of our members have followed the proceedings of the Ward 3 Redistricting Task Force. We are troubled that the Task Force has ignored the Council's directive to ensure neighborhood cohesiveness and keep communities of interest together, and instead has taken "neighborhoods" out of the proposed Advisory Neighborhood Commissions. Advisory Neighborhood Commissions were created to give residents a stronger voice in city planning, zoning, and development decisions that affect their neighborhood. The key word here is "neighborhood."

A particularly egregious example is the Task Force's treatment of Cleveland Park, including the Cleveland Park Historic District, which created a tsunami of letters to the Task Force. The Redistricting Task Force has proposed a new ANC within Ward 3 with a Single Member District (ANC3A05) that runs north-south for 1.7 miles, spanning only a single block at the north end, and dividing the Cleveland Park Historic District in half. In essence, the Task Force has created a corridor encompassing portions of communities that have no relation to each other, cutting people off from their neighbors with whom they share common interests. In the case of Cleveland Park, the result is that the two Single Member Districts that currently comprise most of the Cleveland Park Historic District have been redistricted among five Single Member Districts, split between two separate Advisory Neighborhood Commissions. This manipulation would undermine the ability of this neighborhood to engage effectively at the ANC level or be heard by the DC government. It would disempower neighborhood residents and complicate efforts to take a wholistic approach to neighborhood and historic preservation issues.

In reaction to the approach taken by the Task Force, a group of neighborhood organizations from throughout Ward 3 came together to prepare and offer a comprehensive alternative redistricting map for the entire Ward, entitled the "Neighborhood Voices alternative map. They call this map the "Neighborhood Voices" alternative. The Neighborhood Voices map essentially captures Cleveland

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945 G Street, N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20001

www.committeeof100.net

info@committeeof100.net

Park within a single ANC and maintains the current configuration of the Cleveland Park Historic District within two Single Member Districts. One of the goals of redistricting is to maintain and encourage neighborhood cohesion. In contrast to the Task Force proposal, the Neighborhood Voices proposal respects and advances this objective. Inexplicably, the Task Force did not seriously consider the Neighborhood Voices alternative. We are not aware of other redistricting proposals that eviscerate historic districts in the fashion the Ward 3 Task Force did. If they exist, our concerns apply equally to them.

The Council should reject proposals that undermine this goal. Washington, DC is often described as a “city of neighborhoods,” a term that recognizes the rich diversity of neighborhoods with row houses, low-rise and high-rise residences, and single- family homes contained within them. We strongly recommend that the Council protect neighborhoods by adopting the Neighborhood Voices alternative.

We would be happy to discuss with you in further detail why the Neighborhood Voices alternative is best for Ward 3 and the District. Thank you.