FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: August 5, 2021
CONTACT: Mia Arreguin, mia@progressga.org

PROGRESSIVE LEADERS URGE GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY, CONTINUED OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC INPUT AS REDISTRICTING HEARINGS COME TO A CLOSE

ATLANTA - During last week’s public hearings around redistricting one thing was clear: Georgians demand a transparent, fair, and equitable community districting process.

However—although the Census Bureau states the release of the redistricting data files will happen by August 16, 2021 in a format that can be used by Georgia’s Reapportionment and Redistricting Committees to draw proposed maps—no opportunities for public input on proposed maps are currently scheduled beyond August 11.

Today, progressive organizations urge elected leaders to remember their commitment to serve and listen to Georgians. This must begin with government transparency and continued public input on fair redistricting and the map drawing process.

Ken Lawler, Fair Districts GA:

“Given Georgia’s history of gerrymandering, one of the clearest, most common requests we heard from the public hearings is that Georgians want to review and comment on the proposed maps before they are voted on. With the data release on August 16, Georgia’s redistricting committees should now be able to provide a public timeline for the release of the maps. That timeline should include at least a 2-week period for public review and comment. And because Georgia’s laws provide almost no rules for redistricting, a fully transparent redistricting process should also be governed by a set of guidelines. These guidelines should be in place before map-drawing begins and are a critical next step in the process.”

Kayla Kane, Southern Poverty Law Center Data and Research Analyst:

“Georgia’s past redistricting plans have repeatedly diluted the voting strength of people of color by creating districts in which they could not elect their preferred candidates. Breaking from Georgia’s shameful history begins with a fair districting process that allows all Georgians to provide meaningful input. And, for Georgia to move forward successfully, legislators must respond to community members’ stated, repeated concerns and earnestly commit to produce districts that provide fair representation to all Georgians. Fair representation makes it so much more likely that everyone in Georgia has the ability to access quality healthcare, attend quality schools, and travel safely along roads, bridges, and railways.”

Staci Fox, Planned Parenthood Southeast Advocates President and CEO:

“The political landscape in Georgia is changing, and the districts of our state should reflect the diversity of our communities. In 2020, Georgia set records for voter turnout and election participation despite the
coronavirus pandemic. The people of our state have fought hard to make their voices heard and engage in the civic process. We deserve to have a say regarding the maps that will affect Georgia for the next 10 years.”

Nsé Ufot, New Georgia Project Action Fund CEO:

“Elections should be determined by the people, not by politically motivated maps or racist gerrymandering. The New Georgia Majority- Black, brown, Asian, young. LGBTQ+ and first-time voters have already made history changing the state’s political landscape, and so we must center these community voices - and especially communities of color - in the redistricting process. Ensuring fair elections and fair maps for all Georgians is a requirement, not an ask, to not only preserve but also strengthen our vulnerable democracy”

Vyanti Joseph, Asian American Advocacy Fund Organizing Director:

“We demand that any maps being drawn be shared with the public as soon as possible, and that we continue to provide opportunities for communities of color to provide input. Our communities have every right to be involved in the decision-making process for drawing their own district lines, which is why we continue to demand a fair and transparent redistricting process that includes the needs of communities of interest. Reelection or political gain should not be the goal of drawing district lines. These are our communities, our lines.”

Andrea Young, American Civil Liberties Union of Georgia Executive Director: “In Georgia, diversity is our strength. As we watch the Olympics with our families, we remember when the world came to Georgia during the 1996 Olympics. From that time, our diversity has increased so that more than 45% of voting age Georgians identify as Black, Hispanic, or Asian American. Our elected representatives should reflect that diversity,” said Andrea Young, executive director of the ACLU of Georgia.

Theron Johnson, All On The Line Georgia State Director: “Georgians deserve fair maps and we have made it crystal-clear, through the recent series of public hearings, that we will accept nothing less. As we move closer to the release of final Census data and a special redistricting session, legislators must allow opportunities for public input on proposed maps to ensure Georgians continue to guide this process in the spirit of democracy.”

Fenika Miller, Black Voters Matter Georgia Senior State Coordinator:

“We know it is because of Black voters that we flipped the state of Georgia. The work in this state is far from finished in fact, this is only the beginning. Black voters deserve a redistricting process which allows us to choose our elected officials, as opposed to elected officials choosing their voters. We have a right to have our voice heard when it comes to determining Georgia’s maps for the next 10 years, and we won’t stop until this process is conducted in a fair and transparent manner.”

Elton Garcia, GALEO Community Organizer:

“Folks deserve transparency of the entire process in their own language with all Georgia residents viewing and commenting on the final maps before they go to a vote. We need language access.”