

Testimony of Mr. Aula Sumbry
Chair, The Racial and Economic Disparities Subcommittee
of
The Integrated Justice Alliance of New Jersey
Before
the Apportionment Commission of New Jersey
on
January 29, 2011

Good afternoon, my name is Aula Sumbry and I am the Chair of the Racial and Economic Disparities Subcommittee of the Integrated Justice Alliance of New Jersey. At the Alliance, we take the position that the central value we should consider in redistricting is the one of fairness. We are very concerned that we count prisoners fairly in New Jersey, and that means we should be counting incarcerated people as residents of their home communities and not in the communities where they are incarcerated.

We wish the Commission had considered this issue of fairness before now, but we want to make you aware, on record, that clustering prisons together for redistricting purposes violates the principle of "one person, one vote." Given this, the Commission should treat the addresses of incarcerated people as unknown until you can solve this problem of unfairness.

As Dr. Foster has testified, as soon as data are released, the Alliance will be readjusting the population totals to address this issue, and we are happy to work with you to ensure a fair count. We are determined to see that New Jersey be freed of the democracy-undermining effects that are inherent in Prison Based Gerrymandering. Do not continue to grant extra voting power to a few communities on the backs of all other residents of this state. Our neighbors New York and Delaware along with Maryland have ended this practice. We trust that New Jersey will as well.

Thank you.