



## South Jersey Women for Progressive Change

### TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION OF SCR43

The South Jersey Women for Progressive Change is an organization that seeks to engage in the work that elevates the voices of those that have been marginalized in South Jersey. A very key component to the work takes place in the political and legislative arenas that hold power over the structures that are currently in place to create space for all voices to be heard.

**We are strongly opposed to SCR43, a proposal to amend the New Jersey State Constitution that would codify the partisan gerrymandering of our 40 legislative districts and pre-determine election outcomes for decades to come.**

We advocate for access, transparency, and the dismantling of oppressive structures within New Jersey by taking a critical look at who holds the power in decision-making process. The past practice of manipulating district lines to favor one political party should not be cemented as a law in this state. Shifting the control of these lines from the political party chair to an elected official does not eliminate the bias that should not be allowed in this process. A political appointee, whether appointed or elected, is still a political appointee. Our concerns with the current ballot line structure confirm to us that this change to the commission would still not equate to the fairness that is a right of the voters in New Jersey.

SCR43 does not move us towards where we need to be, encouraging voter registration and turnout, increasing civic engagement, or provide pathways for our state representatives to truly represent the demographics of the people that live in the state, in our communities. The language in this proposal is unclear and is the antithesis of what is needed to engage our citizens and our youth.

We are fully cognizant of the personality battles that have been going on between factions of our elected representatives and in our viewpoint, this latest proposal is yet another chapter in that tale. We are asking for level-headed thinking from all members of the Senate to step back and realize that the state constitution is NOT the place to be hashing out these power struggles.

While New Jersey was once held up as a state that was a decent example of the process used for drawing district lines, there has always been room for improvement. However, SCR43 is not that improvement. We simply cannot allow leaders to wield this tool to protect political power, as it has been used in the past. It did not work well then, and it is negligent to try again.

Focusing on this issue rather than elevating the voices of communities of color, of our immigrant population, even of women across the state sends the message that you really do not care about them having a voice. It says "Use your voice to vote for me, then be quiet until I need you again."

On behalf of the South Jersey Women for Progressive Change, I stand here and ask you to vote "No" on SCR43 and refuse to allow this proposal to come out of Committee.