



To: Co-Chairs Jones and Barlas, 11th Member Carchman & All 11 Members of the New Jersey Legislative Apportionment Commission

From: Chrissy Buteas – Executive Director of NEW JOBS PAC

Date: January 26, 2022

RE: **NEW JOBS Business PAC Seeking Balance in New Jersey's State Legislative Districts**

Good afternoon! My name is Chrissy Buteas, Executive Director for the NEW JOBS PAC. NEW JOBS is composed of businesses from every industry sector and region of New Jersey, and the PAC advocates for pro-business legislators. NEW JOBS appreciates and respects the guiding principles that Judge Carchman presented to this Commission, and towards that, we felt compelled to present the business community perspective on the task in front of all of you – reapportioning New Jersey's 40 legislative districts with some of those principles in mind.

The business community can be best described as neutral on many of Judge Carchman's principles, but the key principle of competitiveness fits into the recurring theme for NEW JOBS, what we routinely ask legislators, and what we are requesting today from you - **BALANCE**. Balance is important both among the various guiding principles and within districts to ensure competitiveness. Judge Carchman called for harmonizing competing interests with the public interest at its core, and that public interest is competitive elections and balanced public policy representing all sides of an issue. While the competitiveness principle should not dominate to the exclusion of Judge Carchman's other principles, NEW JOBS believes it should be prioritized to improve our democratic process.

The business community believes that competitive districts lead to competitive ideas and strong, balanced public policy. Noncompetitive districts lead to a lack of healthy dialogue and discussion among our policymakers across the aisle, resulting in less thoughtful policy and choices made by inertia. To avoid leaving the state as an outlier when evaluating our state's overall economy, strong policy-making is critical so New Jersey is better positioned to be a leader in all areas of public policy, from innovation to education to infrastructure.

The facts speak for themselves as we are one of the most indebted states in the nation and an outlier in many costs of doing business. Our chronic debt has continuously exacerbated our state's fiscal challenges and has often fueled our high costs. To find that better balance in the future where New Jersey can be pro-business on tax policy but still have adequate revenue to invest in workforce development, infrastructure, and innovation, pro-jobs on environmental policy but still protect the environment, and pro-employer on labor mandates but still protect workers; we need more

moderate legislators to execute those more nuanced and middle-of-the-road policies that will prevent us from being anti-business outliers. **Not surprisingly, NEW JOBS sees evidence that moderate legislators are often the ones from competitive or swing legislative districts, so we are requesting that you make more of these balanced districts that create moderate legislators.**

If legislators have a similar number of constituents that are concerned about affordability and controlling debt as concerned about investing more in government programs, then we are more balanced on the appropriate use of government dollars and less likely to be an outlier on taxes. If the constituents wanting to protect worker rights and the environment are similar in size to those that care about ensuring there are good-paying jobs and fewer needless mandates that other states don't have, then New Jersey is more likely to be balanced with our regulatory climate. If legislators are worried about national and state trends impacting the voting patterns of their local legislative district and their chances to win elections, then they will be less likely to only cater to one side or the other in policy debates.

Conversely, if a legislator routinely gets more than 60% of the vote, then they are less likely to be balanced and worry about both sides of a policy debate. New Jersey currently has too many of those legislative districts where legislators are insulated from bad policy decisions on both sides of the political spectrum, and limiting those districts is better for the district's constituents as the legislators are likely to be more responsive to them and push for moderate policy overall.

It can be a challenge to define a competitive district, but I think it would be beneficial to make as many districts as possible more balanced. I think this Commission should have the simultaneous goals of 1) making those non-competitive districts where legislators expect to get 65-70-75-80% of the vote (unfortunately about half of all districts) closer to 60% districts, 2) taking the districts where the victor often gets 55-60% of the vote and making them single-digit races, and 3) keep the handful of districts that are routinely competitive such as today's 2, 8, 11 and 16, as those districts are evidence that legislators in competitive districts have often brought more balance and moderation.

The NEW JOBS PAC on behalf of the New Jersey business community requests that you create a legislative district map that fosters more balanced districts and competitive races that will moderate New Jersey's policies and make our legislators more responsive to all of their constituents – laudable goals for all New Jerseyans, not just the business community. It will also have a side benefit of hopefully increasing civic participation across the state as more New Jerseyans will feel that every vote matters. Thank you for considering our perspective, and if you have any questions, you may contact me at cbuteas@newjobspac.com" cbuteas@newjobspac.com.