



**Rev. Daniel Hughes**

**TESTIMONY OF:**

Rev. Daniel Hughes

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**IN SUPPORT OF:**

Maps proposed by the Ohio Citizens' Redistricting Commission  
submitted to the Ohio Redistricting Commission

**"Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better." —**  
**[#MayaAngelou](#)**

**[Cincinnati, Ohio]** Good afternoon Co-Chair Cupp, Co-Chair Sykes and members of the Ohio Redistricting Commission. I am Rev. Daniel Hughes, Faith Organizer of the Amos Project here in Cincinnati. I was born and raised in rural Northwest Ohio and have lived in Southwest Ohio for the last 8 years. I've pastored in rural, urban, and suburban Ohio communities for over 22 years.

I LOVE Ohio and all of the different people who make up this great and diverse state. I find it immoral and reprehensible that my elected officials are not only willing to but actively engaged in stripping the folks from Roundhead, Bluffton, Lima, Cincinnati, and every unique community in this great state of our God-given and democratic right to be represented by people who know and love our unique communities.

As a black man who grew up in Roundhead, I know all too well what it is like to have my voice ignored and issues unaddressed by leaders who just don't get it. I know what it is like to have people who don't know or represent my community's values or culture making critical decisions for us. You have a responsibility to ensure that ALL Ohians are invested in this democracy and represented by the people most acquainted with their issues, needs, concerns, and future.

When I think of the condition of the communities where I have lived and served, the communities in which my congregants resided in, and many of the communities in this city and state (communities, by the way, that are populated by poor people & persons of color), I can't help but think about the ways in which gerrymandering has crippled them. We need maps that keep our communities together, empower communities of color, and match the partisan breakdown of our state.

The ways in which our communities have been inequitably districted cripples the ability of our neighborhoods to elevate their station. Unfair districting mutes the voices of our citizens, in that we do not have adequate representation to voice our needs. The absence of those political voices leads to an absence of resources. Limited resources lead to limited choices and limited choices point to poor ones being made.

Just because the way that these maps have been drawn have no affect on your community does not mean that it doesn't affect ours. Redistricting our neighborhoods in a more fair and equitable way, positions us to have the political power required to address the issues on our streets. Issues that have race and class at the center of them. Better communities begin with better maps. To have elected leadership support and condone this type of abuse is insidious. And another decade of maps that signify where prosperity starts and where poverty ends is intolerable.

We demand better service from our public servants. Children who end up with substandard schools demand better. Families who live in fear because they are overpoliced demand better. Black, Brown and poor people who deserve all of the same first class living conditions their counterparts have demand better. The God of Justice and Righteousness for all people demands better. Doing what is fair is not an act of favoritism. Rather, it is the radical act of just doing what is right. The first step towards making long term improvements in our communities is to change the way in which our communities are districted.

We are better than this and now is the time to do better! Ohio and the United States of America need leaders who can lead from our highest and best ideals. You need to restore public confidence in our politics. Let's not be like the other anti-democratic states who seek to disempower the most important part of our fragile democracy—the citizen. In closing, maps should keep our communities together, empower communities of color, and match the partisan breakdown of our state.