



Akii Bulter

TESTIMONY OF:

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IN SUPPORT OF:

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

[Columbus, OH]

Good Morning, Co-Chair Cupp, Co-Chair Sykes and members of the Ohio Redistricting Commission, my name is Akii Butler, I am 24 years old and have been a citizen of this state since the age of 3. Growing up in Ohio, one of the things that has been most interesting to me is the fact that we have been told time and time again that we are a purple state yet the maps that have been drawn in the past and the map that was unveiled last week does not only contradict that statement but they are also a slap in the face to every voter here in Ohio.

I am a new resident to the city of Columbus, as I was raised in Youngstown, OH. In school I took an Advanced Placement government class and they touched on redistricting a bit, even talked about gerrymandering but never fully went deep into the topics. It wasn't until I did research on my own later in college that I was fully able to understand the actual topics and it wasn't until most recently that I realized that the districts that I grew up in and the district that I currently live in are deemed unconstitutional gerrymanders.

As someone that has grown up in Youngstown and has traveled to Warren many times, whether it was for work, or to visit friends and family, it makes no sense for them to be split into two separate districts. This is just one example of how communities are split apart and certain peoples' voices diluted.

With the Ohio Student Association we work to educate and engage students in the civic process. Some college campuses and student residential areas across the state are broken up into multiple districts to dilute their voices. Students should be able to advocate for ourselves and our futures with elected officials who know the power of our voice and the importance of our concerns. All too often, young people feel like their interests are ignored by the people who are supposed to represent them.

As we all know The Ohio Constitution and federal law require map drawers to consider whether

communities of color have adequate and real pathways to political representation. However, the republicans admitted in a public hearing on Sept.9th that you didn't even take that into consideration.

Students and all citizens of Ohio demand a fair redistricting process and fair and equal maps. This is not only a want but a need. The citizens of this state deserve accurate maps so that they can have accurate and fair representation within their districts. For too long certain cities, counties and more have suffered because they are lumped together with areas they have nothing in common with. You can tell us that our votes matter and then introduce a map that would give Republicans more than 55% of government seats when they have only won about 55% of the Ohio vote.

In conclusion I ask that you take what we are saying seriously and you draw maps that actually reflect the citizens' voice. You can't keep saying that you work for the people, and then ignore us and our demands of fair maps. Growing up I was told the power was in the hands of the people, yet time you draw maps you take more and more power away to the point you're essentially picking who you want to represent and that is not democracy.