

August 27, 2021 – Written Testimony submitted at University of Akron

To: Ohio Redistricting Commission members and,  
Co-chairs: Senator Vernon Sykes and OH House Speaker Robert Cupp

Thank you for allowing me to submit written testimony to the Ohio Redistricting Commission. My name is anastasia birosh, and my pronouns are ze/zir/zirs. I currently vote in OH House District 70, OH Senate District 22, and OH Congressional District 16 in Brunswick City. Brunswick is divided between two OH House Districts (69 & 70) and two Congressional Districts (7 & 16). It's time that Brunswick be in one OH House District and one Congressional District.

Rep. Kick planted the seed for this testimony five years ago in 2016. I drove down to Ashland to attend a "listening session" newly-elected Rep. Kick was having at various locations throughout the "district." I asked what his thoughts were on gerrymandering and how Ohio could avoid it going forward. He punted the question to a more seasoned "aid" who assured me that Ohio's districts, as they were, were as fair as they could be. I then asked why Brunswick was in two OH House Districts?

The aid's answer centered primarily on population equality and little else. I left that "listening session" feeling unheard and ignored.

The feelings of being unheard and ignored are more significant now in 2021 than in 2016. I feel that Rep. Kick doesn't take redistricting seriously. One case in point involves a Medina Gazette article dated August 4, 2021. In that article, Rep. Kick mentioned that redistricting was an important item on his agenda, saying, "They are going through the census (data) now." But sadly, the U.S. Census Bureau didn't release the redistricting data until August 12, 2021, nine days after he made this comment at the Medina County Commissioners meeting on August 3, 2021.

I along with many other Ohioans supported redistricting reforms in 2015 and again in 2018. Please, when this Commission begins redistricting, I ask that the process is fair, transparent, non-discriminatory, and politically impartial. I also ask that Brunswick City be allocated to one OH House District and one Congressional District. Finally, I have hope that this process will be open and bipartisan as mandated in the Ohio Constitution.

In closing, It gives me pause when my "representative" is more beholden to his political party than the people he is supposed to represent. It also gives me pause when the governor chooses to attend a Bengals photo op rather than attending to the serious business of this Commission. I fear that no one in power in this state cares about the fairness, transparency, and bipartisan work required to create districts that provide fair representation.

Sincerely,

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