

**Ohio Redistricting Commission**  
**Public Hearing**  
**August 26, 2021**  
**2:30p – 5:30p**  
**Toledo Lucas County Public Library (Main Branch)**

**Public Testimony**

*Submitted and delivered by: Rev. John C. Jones, President – HOPE Toledo*

Commission Members

- Senator Vernon Sykes, Co-Chair
- Representative Robert Cupp (Speaker of House), Co-Chair
- Senator Matt Huffman (Senate President)
- Representative Emilia Sykes (House Minority Leader)
- Governor Mike DeWine
- Keith Faber (Auditor)
- Frank LaRose (Secretary of State)

**Greetings**

Good afternoon! To Chair Sykes and Cupp, to Governor Dewine and to each member of this Commission. I would first like to thank Jason Kucsma and the wonderful people of one of our treasured institutions – The Toledo Lucas County Public Library – for hosting this event today.

My name is John C. Jones. I am an ordained minister and serve under the leadership of my father, Pastor Charles E. Jones at the Christian Temple Baptist Church in the heart of our City. I am also a proud member of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. where I serve as President of our Alumni Chapter (Alpha Xi Lambda). I am here today in my role as President of [HOPE Toledo](#). I reside in Senate District 11 – Senator Fedor. I am a proud, life-long resident of House District 44 – Representative Paula Hicks Hudson and the Ninth Congressional District – Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur, infamously known now as “the snake on the lake”.

I am here today because overwhelmingly, the constituents (your constituents) in the State of Ohio voted for this Commission to be in place in order to correct and safeguard against levels of gerrymandering that impact all of Ohio’s people. The redrawing of district lines based on the most recent census data is crucial for a fair, equitable and representative legislative process. We all understand that, but it is now critical for us to do everything we can to ensure that happens. Unfortunately when this process does not happen in a fair, non-partisan way it has a direct and often negative impact on children, youth and families.

Support for our children sits at a high level across party lines, with over 70% of Americans favoring the increased funding to expand access to early childhood education. We know that historically in Ohio equitable resources related to education have not been allocated to all communities fairly. We know the current funding for K-12 education in our state has been ruled unconstitutional. We now have a unique moment to build on the few steps of progress made in this current year’s budget and move toward this place of adequate, equitable and sustainable funding for years to come.

We know that nearly 90% of a child's brain development takes place between birth and 5-years-old. Currently more than 80% of Toledo students are entering Kindergarten without the knowledge and skills necessary to learn successfully and they continue to lag behind in subsequent school years. What we need is a strong educational start for our children if we expect them to experience increased levels of success at 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading and 8<sup>th</sup> grade math, as well as graduate at higher rates and pursue postsecondary education. This educational foundation is crucial to the earning potential of our residents over their lifetime.

It is imperative we develop a comprehensive, community-based approach to early childhood education and care. We need to ensure the work being done by our school districts through programs like Head Start, continue to positively impact our children. Concomitantly we need to ensure community-based Providers, many of whom are small businesses, have the requisite support and resources to continue to deliver high quality educational experiences consistently. Our teachers in this sector must be paid a fair and competitive wage. They also need ongoing professional development which only increases the outcomes for our children. We must engage families in the process, because we know that when parents are afforded the opportunity to be involved in the educational experience of their child our communities do better. We cannot allow this work and the need for high quality outcomes to be dependent on the district in which a family lives.

The opportunity to do this is NOW!!! We know that in order for our children – who are not republican or democrat – to compete in this world they need a strong, equitable start. We must act now before another generation suffers! You as a Commission have both the authority and mandate from the people of the State of Ohio to act to ensure we properly draw these lines and in turn protect our children and young people, in order to secure both their future and ours as a community. I urge you to act with fidelity to your mission and compassion for our children and families.

Thank you for your time today!