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My name is Margaret Mitchell. Today, I am representing YWCA Greater Cleveland, where I serve as President & CEO. I am also a member of the YWCA Ohio Council, a coalition of 14 sister YWCAs across the state, championing women's rights and human dignity. We are dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women, and promoting peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all. The YWCA is one of the oldest and largest multicultural organizations promoting solutions to enhance the lives of women, girls and families. Today, I am submitting this testimony in favor of fair maps in Ohio.

This year, we have an opportunity to do right by our communities. These maps will make decisions for political action and advocacy for the next ten years. In a rapidly changing Ohio, we need fair representation so that our communities can survive and thrive in this state. In Ohio, YWCA has a legacy. We serve many marginalized people, focusing on childcare and housing as our main priorities. Women, especially women of color, are in particular impacted by redistricting. We are hopeful that the redistricting reforms of 2015 and 2018 will help curate fairer maps, but intend to keep a watchful eye on this process. We are constituents and we are advocates-- transparency and fairness is important to us.

We are advocating for fair maps for the following reasons:

1. The last ten years of political decisions did not accurately represent the growth of Asian Americans, Black Americans, or Latino Americans in Ohio, leaving these populations susceptible to unfair policies.
2. Fair maps will provide healthy competition for politicians, who have been sitting comfortably in the process for far too long appealing to the fringe, and introduce new actors and interests to represent new groups of people in public governance.
3. Transparency is a right that should be afforded all Ohioans in the political process of public governance.

Cleveland had only a 53% turnout in the 2020 presidential election. Cleveland residents feel disempowered and they deserve representative districts that will allow their voices to be heard.

At YWCA, we are focused on the well-being of women of color and eliminating the misogyny that all too often disproportionately impact this demographic due to policies in which they're not considered. According to the census, Ohio's growth in concentrated areas is due in part to Black, Asian, and Latino populations. These are populations for whom we advocate, whose needs are often overshadowed and left out of the political process. Their needs and desires should have an equal fighting chance in the political

process, with their voices represented at the table. Because we service these communities, we can help the Commission identify where they are as communities of interest locally.

The Commission should only adopt district maps for the Ohio House and Senate that are compact, contiguous and that do not unduly favor or disfavor a political party or individual politician. Any map that is considered should be published *with enough lead time* so that we can fully evaluate each district, community by community, and requested changes made when necessary to ensure fairness. The principles of fairness and transparency requires that any proposed map drafter be made known, and that the Commission avoid a last-moment adoption of a plan that has not been publicly vetted.

In light of the most recent attempts to change voter laws voting opportunities, anti-protest bills, and other forms of undemocratic legislation which threaten the very sanctity of our democratic process, we at YWCA Greater Cleveland and the YWCA Ohio Council feel very strongly in favor of fair maps.

Thank you,

Margaret Mitchell

