



OEC [Action Fund]

**Ohio Redistricting Commission Testimony
Kylie Johnson
August 12, 2021**

My name is Kylie Johnson and I am submitting testimony as a concerned citizen and on behalf of the Ohio Environmental Council Action Fund as the Southwest Ohio Regional Director.

I have been a Cincinnati resident for the past nine years and can speak from my lived experience in this region. For the past decade, Cincinnatians have rejected the leadership of incumbent Representatives Steve Chabot and Brad Wenstrup. For example, last November Kate Schroder won more than 80% of the vote in city precincts in opposition to Chabot. However, the votes of our community didn't matter because of gerrymandered districts. It's time to end this cycle of corruption and draw fair districts that reflect the voters who live in them.

I care deeply about the health of our environment. A healthy environment is not possible without a functioning and fair democracy. For too long, politicians have rigged Ohio's electoral maps to preserve political power and silence the voice of our communities. Because of these maps, our legislators often fail to respond to Ohio voters' views on pressing issues like natural resource protections and renewable energy growth.

Specifically, the creation of fair maps must center the voices of Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) who experience more environmental injustices. Low-income communities of color facing financial and health barriers from systemic racism are disproportionately impacted by severe air and water pollution. In Cincinnati, the government-sanctioned racist housing practices in the 1930s and 1940s have left low-income communities of color at the greatest risk for experiencing extreme heat and flooding due to climate change. It is imperative that our district maps are drawn fairly so that our communities most impacted by the climate crisis are protected.

Under our current maps, Ohio has many districts (including those in Cincinnati) that crack apart communities. The deliberate cracking of communities dilutes the power Ohioans have to advocate for issues that must take priority in being addressed by their legislature. Look no further than the scandal surrounding House Bill 6 (HB 6). When surveyed, Ohioans overwhelmingly support policies taking action on climate change, renewable energy, clean water, and more. However, in 2019, the Ohio legislature passed HB 6, legislation that short-circuited Ohio's best tools for advancing renewable energy, energy efficiency, and fighting the climate crisis.



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Today, Ohioans still overwhelmingly want a healthier environment for their families and bold action on climate change from our elected officials. Our legislature should reflect the will of the people. Our communities and our environment win when we have districts representative of communities.

I urge you to consider this critical perspective when advocating for fair maps and equal districts in Ohio.