**Ohio Redistricting Commission - 8-24-2021 - Cincinnati**

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**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:00:05] Thank you all for your attendance today. We're opening the meeting for the Ohio Redistricting Commission. I am State Senator Vernon Sykes from the Akron area and co-chair of the commission. We are so thankful the University of Cincinnati is hosting us here today. We really appreciate David Adams, the chief innovation officer who helped make these arrangements for us. Anybody who wishes to testify today, please fill out a witness slip and we plan on being here to listen to everyone. We have an overflow room that will be able to view the proceedings here as well. The proceedings are also recorded on The Ohio Channel and live streamed. We have a website as well, at www.redistricting.Ohio.gov where you can get additional information about the additional hearings that we plan on having, as well as submit written testimony and actually submit maps. With that, will the staff please call the roll.

**Roll Call** [00:01:25] Yes sir. Co-chair Senator Vernon Sykes (present); Representative Tom Brinkman designee for Speaker Cupp (Yes); Matt Donahue, designee for Governor Mike DeWine (present); Alex Bilchek, designee for auditor Keith Faber [inaudible]; Secretary Frank LaRose (here); Representative Jessica Moranda, designee for Leader Sykes [inaudible]; and last but not least, Senator Louis Blessing, designee for President Matt Huffman (here).

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:01:58] We do have a quorum to move forward, at this time we'd like to recognize other state representatives and senators who are in the room, if you would stand, please, to be recognized.

**Representative Kelly** [00:02:13] Brigid Kelly, State Represenative for the 31st House District;.

**Senator Thomas** [00:02:13] State Senator Cecil Thomas [inaudible]. (applause).

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:02:24] As you may know, in November 2015, Ohio voters approved the constitutional amendment, which implemented a new General Assembly redistricting process and established the Ohio Redistricting Commission. The commission consists of the governor, the state auditor, secretary of state and one commissioner appointed by each of the legislative leaders of the two largest political parties of the House and the Ohio Senate, four in total, one from each of the caucuses. The commission has until September the 1st, 2021, to pass a plan with the votes of at least two members affiliated with each majority party. If that fails, the commission has until September 15 to pass a plan by majority vote for members. Maps that are passed with the votes of two members affiliated with each major party are valid for 10 years, and maps passed by a simple majority vote are valid for two general assemblies four years. We appreciate your attendance here today. We have a lot of people here that shown a lot of interest. This is now our second day and our fourth hearing or traveling around the state. We will continue for the rest of this week. But these are just the initial hearings that will be held. At this time any members have any questions? We'd like to move forward with the hearing. We're not here to debate you or one another, we're here to listen to you, to find out what your opinions are and what your ideas are, what your hopes...as it relates to fair districts here in the state of Ohio. The first witness is Tony de Ambrogio [?]. I would like to apologize in advance for any stumblings I may make with names. It is not intended. Tony de Ambrogio [?]. Janice Baker. Yeah. We have people in the overflow room, we want to allow them an opportunity to respond as well. You know, the staff check to make sure they can hear us. Chaz Bennet [?]. Hmm. Can we stand at ease just for a few minutes to check in and see if the... they have audio in the overflow room. [pause]

**Witness 1** [00:08:35] Good afternoon. Honored panelists and legislators. Thank you for allowing our community to weigh in on what I believe is one of the most vital components or pernicious obstacles to fair elections and perhaps democracy– the power to redistrict or in its worst form, gerrymandering. Since all of us have this window constitutionally every 10 years, you bear a great responsibility to do the right and equitable thing for the communities that you represent. My fascination with redistricting began in the mid 70s. I graduated from Marietta College in 1970 in southeastern Ohio and felt the need to involve myself in politics. During that time, I aligned myself politically with whatever party opposed the Vietnam War. But I was equally interested in how redistricting had become a tool to guarantee incumbency rather than ensure fair elections for the electorate. Because in that era, the leadership of the state often varied between Democrats and Republicans. It became clear to me that whichever party was in control, would use redistricting as a device to stay there. I thought it undemocratic then, and I believe fervently that nothing has changed. In fact, it has gotten worse, not because of who is in charge now, but rather the technology has enabled those in office to become more precise and, if you will, extreme in their map drawing. At some point, the party in control of the process is going to have to make the choice to abandon the politics of the moment and look to the future. For the Republicans in charge now, I understand it will be more difficult for you to advocate for fairness and equity down the road because you are in charge now. My party, the Democratic Party, did not do so when they had the opportunity. Down the road, things will change, as they always do in our state, and we will be in control again. But for the 70 percent of the people and the majority of voters in every single county in this state who voted to improve the redistricting process in 2015 and 2018, we don't care who does it. We just want it done. (applause) From my perspective, the process would be taken out of your hands almost completely, the drawing of districts should be party neutral. (applause) We know it is best to keep communities and counties within the same voting district, we know it is wrong for me to be in one state district and my neighbor across the street in another. We know it is possible to measure the compactness of a district as compared with the elongated versions that now exist along Lake Erie or in southeastern Ohio. We know a process can be set up which can select the best submissions from residents of the state. Currently, twenty one United States excuse me, 21 states have some form of nonpartisan or bipartisan redistricting commission. Of those, 13 use these commissions to draw district boundaries. I would even venture to say that bipartisanship in this process should not be the goal, the goal is a fair and equitable process for all voters. I hope that should all of you decide that it is time to make the great state of Ohio a beacon of fair elections for the nation and that your bravery will be rewarded for generations to come. Every citizen in this state will owe you a debt of gratitude for your profile in courage. Thank you. (applause)

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:13:54] Ladies and gentlemen, in an effort to provide courtesy for everyone that would like to speak, we will limit the time four to four minutes. We found that to be kind of the sweet spot, in other hearings, and that should be adequate time to communicate to us your your interests. Next person is Marcy Kanter.

**Kanter** [00:14:27] Hi, excuse me, my name is Marcy Kanter and I live in Sims township in Hamilton County. I'm also a member of the Civic Engagement Committee at Isaac M. Wise Temple and Amberly Village. Gerrymandering has affected my community as I live in the Sycamore community school system. Our community is a tight knit community as there are four elementary schools, then the entire school system comes together with one middle school, one junior high and one high school. Many students start in kindergarten and are in Sycamore schools all the way through graduation from high school. The cities and towns represented are Blue Ash, Montgomery, Sycamore Township, Symmes Township and a slice of Loveland. This is our community. I do not represent the Sycamore School District. My kids graduated 14 years ago. However, I have lifelong friends and groups that I'm still active in with all my Sycamore friends. If issues come up where we need our state and federal government, we are divided into two. Where I live in State District 27, along with an eastern vertical strip of Hamilton County. Representative Thomas Brinkman, I am one of your constituents. A large section of Hamilton County, Blue Ash in particular, is part of District 28. Sycamore Community Schools does not have a voice in government because we are divided in two. Turning to congressional maps, I live in District one, which is portions of Hamilton County and all of Warren County. Sycamore Community is also split into District 1 and District 2. Blue Ash is scooped out of Hamilton County and put into Claremont County, to make up District 2. So again, Sycamore community schools don't have a voice in government because we are divided in two. Outside of Sycamore community, my community is 275 and 71 South, toward Kenwood, Hyde Park in downtown Cincinnati, that's where I shop, I eat and attend cultural events. My life is not in Springboro, Franklin, Carlisle, Cold Spring and Dry Run, even though my district is drawn in those communities. Cincinnati and Hamilton County don't have a voice in Congress because it's split apart. My involvement with districts fairly, drawn fairly, started as I collected signatures in 2015 and 2018. This issue was passed overwhelmingly in all 88 counties with 70 percent of the vote. The people of Ohio want fair districts, I want fair districts, so Sycamore Community and Hamilton County will have a voice, a voice in Congress. I want to thank you for taking the time to let me share my voice. (applause)

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:18:10] Thank you. Are there any questions? Thank you. Nicole Clungle and Stephen Dana is up on deck.

**Clungle** [00:18:31] Thank you, your pronunciation was perfect. As you heard, my name is Nicole Clungle, I live in St. Bernard, which is a small village encircled by Cincinnati. I'm addressing my points today specifically to the Republican members of the redistricting commission or to their designees, since so many opted not to be here today. Dear Republicans, we see you. Today, you're going to hear from some of the millions of Ohio voters that you have disenfranchized, we see you. Someone may remind you that 71 percent of Ohio voters want fair districts and have asked you for them repeatedly. We see you. We may discuss how you've used your gerrymandered supermajority to hurt Ohio's children in the short and long terms via unconstitutional school funding and other efforts to undermine public education, we see you. You may hear from people about how Republican gerrymandering has radicalized Republican legislators, leading to theocratic and unscientific restrictions on reproductive health care. We see you. You may hear about how you're radicalized supermajority is removing restrictions on firearms use, even in the face of endemic gun violence and objections from the blue you supposedly back, we see you. You may hear about how your gerrymandered supermajority has sabotaged any possible competent and lifesaving response to the covid-19 pandemic by spreading disinformation about masks and vaccines. We see you. (applause) You may hear dismay over the fact that state redistricting maps are due September 1 and you're only just now holding public hearings in the middle of the business day, we see you. (applause) And through all this, you have demanded civil discourse, you have demanded respect, you have relied on good people to behave like good people. And that is why today you will hear about all the things I've mentioned above and more as if you didn't already know. Like if we just inform you about these egregious abuses, you'll be appalled. You'll fix it immediately, as if gerrymandering were accidental and oversight. Oops...(laughter) We see you. Someone even told me, don't go negative, they'll close their ears as if you hadn't enacted gerrymandering with the explicit purpose of ensuring you'd never have to listen to me. Let's not mince words for you, gerrymandering has always been a feature, not a bug. We see you. Through gerrymandering, you have stolen the voices and votes of Ohio citizens. We see you. You have stolen the future of millions of Ohio's children. We see you. You have actually taken lives with your theocratic and antiscience approaches to reproductive health care, firearm laws and covid-19. We see you. (applause) The pleas of the people speaking during these hearings should not be mistaken for polite requests for an adjustment to policy, they are demands for an end to the violence you have committed against your fellow Ohioans. We see you. (applause)

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:22:22] Thank you. Mr. Stephen Dana and on deck is Jen Scott.

**Stephen Dana** [00:22:37] Thank you, co-chairs and members of this commission. I present testimony from the League of Women Voters of Oxford, Ohio. Fair districts are ones that are made up of communities of shared interests. In recent years, the citizens of Ohio have voted overwhelmingly in support of the creation of fairly drawn state districts and congressional districts, ones that reflect this principle of shared interests. The voters have said that their districts should display fairness, openness and adherence to the law. By your presence here, you have demonstrated a willingness to support maps that embody these principles. We appreciate your stance on this issue. Thank you for your attention to the voices of citizens throughout Ohio. [applause].

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:23:36] Thank you.

**Jen Scott** [00:23:47] Members of the redistricting commission, thank you for allowing me to testify before you today about the future of our redistricting process here in Ohio. My name is Jen Scott. I use she/her pronouns and I am the southwest Ohio, regional organizer at Equality Ohio, the state's LGBTQ legislative and legal nonprofit organization. Equality Ohio firmly believes in fair maps that are representative of all Ohioans and give LGBTQ people the opportunity to be represented in their state legislature and congressional districts. LGBTQ people are everywhere in Ohio. It's a common misconception that our community exists solely in cities and urban areas and that queer people only vote in predominantly blue districts. The truth about our community is that it is incredibly diverse and cuts across many intersections and identities, including party lines, socioeconomic status, race, gender and disability. According to Williams Institute, LGBTQ people are about 4.3% Percent of the population, including 5% of Ohio's workforce. This past June, Pride celebrations happened all over the state in rural small towns and suburbs all over Ohio, from solidly blue districts to solidly red districts. And all LGBTQ people deserve to be represented as whole people with their maps that accurately represent their region. At Equality Ohio, we believe that a fair map is one that accurately reflects a region with respect to localities and their borders, population size and distribution, and a statewide map with a reasonable ratio of political party distribution for representation in Congress and at the statehouse. Conservative areas, progressive areas and flip districts deserve to be represented to create an accurate representation of Ohio. Quite simply, supermajorities are bad for everyone, but especially for LGBTQ people. In 2021, during a time of unprecedented attacks on the LGBTQ community, electing lawmakers that are supportive of our community has never been more essential. Fair representation and districts will improve the possibilities of LGBTQ people to run for office in their home districts, improving the democratic process and LGBTQ representation. Ohio is currently mounting a multimillion dollar campaign to bring people to Ohio. And people want to live in places where they can be fairly represented and have their voices heard. [applause] Future Ohioans will bring their skills, talents and economic value to our state, and we need to give them the opportunity to participate in our democratic process for LGBTQ people looking to move to Ohio. It's important that they can find affirming communities with affirming representation. Equality Ohio supports the redistricting process that understands LGBTQ individuals as key community members and all parts of Ohio. LGBTQ people are our friends, family, neighbors, community members and leaders. Equality Ohio envisions Ohio, where all people are welcomed, affirmed and flourishing. We look forward to working with a more representative Ohio legislature to build about Ohio. Thank you. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:27:05] Geoff Wise.

**Geoffrey Wise** [00:27:17] All right, I want to start by thanking all the commissioners or their delegates for attending today and for traveling throughout the state this week to do ten meetings in five days. It's quite a grueling schedule and we appreciate what you've done here, particularly in the light of covid you you'll hear me OK, is that better? OK, thanks. I mean, the Article 11 only required three hearings after a plan was proposed, and we appreciate it. 90 percent of life is is showing up. My name is Geoff Wise. I came to Ohio twenty two years ago from the other U.C., University of California, Berkeley, way on the West Coast. Land of fruits and nuts. You know, I did engineering Ph.D. and after that, Proctor and Gamble lured me to the land that time forgot... To Cincinnati. [laughter] I've lived in John Boehner's hometown of Redding for two thirds of that time. And now I'm in Wyoming where my kids go to some excellent public schools. In the last year, I've gotten heavily into electoral reform from more of an academic standpoint, mostly focus on the U.S. and I've offered that expertise to this commission I first talked to Dave Ward in your office. He's always been very responsive and I appreciate that. And he referred me to the co-chairs and I've reached out to them. And I'm just willing to help in any way possible because I feel like in order to get fair districts, you have to measure them. You have to know what you're measuring against and you have to line what those criteria are with with the people that care about it. I'm really concerned that we don't have time to do that. We could... We may not have time to do that, and the process seems a little rushed. OK. And I brought a little bit of visual aid here because I think some people think of making districts kind of like making sausage. Right. Yeah, it's a little gross, right? It's kind of nasty. You can twist in all sorts of shapes. You want to vary natural shapes. You can slice and dice and contort it. And that's what we have today. And when the Ohio voters looked at the 2011 batch of sausage, we spat it out. We said we cannot swallow this last batch of sausage that you have made. And that's over 70 percent of Ohioans, both Democrats and Republicans, over two votes for both Article 11 and Article 19. And what that means is that we need to fundamentally change how we make the sausage. That's what we're asking you to do. So I work at P&G and we solve a lot of technically challenging problems. That's why I love working there. And that's why I thought I have some expertise to bring here, because we do things that seem really hard and messy, like making diapers and menstrual pads. Yeah, and I didn't have a visual aid for that. But you can imagine testing whether you've made a good diaper takes takes some messy stuff, even messier than making sausage. But you have to get into it. You have to really embrace the problem, OK? You got to love it and you got to make it the best that you can. And when I was really hoping to come out of this effort is an embracing of the problem that involved the people of Ohio. I mean, we're the home of Bob Evans. We love sausage, right? Here in Cincinnati we've got the Flying Pig Marathon, right? Let's embrace sausage. Let's make the best sausage we can. And what I thought we should do and honestly, there is still time to do that based on people I've talked to. What we need to do is try to get a scorecard for what's the best sausage. And to be honest, I don't even know what your criteria are when you're looking at the maps. How do you know this map is better than that one that has not been disclosed to the public? And if we don't understand that. [applause] If we don't understand that we are never going to get to the best map, and that's what the people of Ohio want and I honestly think it can be a lot of fun. I think your jobs could be a lot easier if you if you sent this out to the community. You can have a contest like are you smarter than a legislator? You know, who's got the best map, you know, I can beat what comes out of the commission, what comes out of simulations? Let's learn from this experience. Let's be a model. It doesn't have to be a burden. I watched that first meeting that you had and it looked like a lot of you had sunken heads. The other co-chair who wasn't here today, I guess, Brinkman, you're the designee for him? He seemed like the main message was we're out... We're short on time. Technically, we could have met as early as January as the full committee, yeah? [applause] You don't have to wait... You don't have to wait for the latest batch of raw pork to figure out how you're going to make the sausage. You can practice with the sausage that you do have and you can reach out. I have no idea who in academics... Or I mean, there's a lot of people working in this field of how do we make fair maps. I look on the website, I see nothing about how we're doing it. And the process is... You need to have that process to get to the end result. Let me close with one one final thought here. When you don't have an open process, people will suspect that you're hiding something. All right, whether it's true or not, that's what they're going to think. They're going to try to think that you're trying to sneak in as much bias as possible. And if you look at what's written in the Ohio Constitution and what the commissioners pledged, an oath to in Article 11, there is no wiggle room for sneaking in bias. It's gonna get caught. I would not even. Let's let's just not even go there, because when we go there, there's the suspicion. There's a distrust. The lawyers get involved and then you get distracted. And then we get the... Ohio taxpayers get a huge bill. There is no need for that. Let us work together. So that's my testimony. Thanks for your time [applause].

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:33:21] Thank you very much, Kathleen Brinkman. And on deck, we have Andrea Denenberg.

**Kathleen Brinkman** [00:33:37] Good afternoon, Ohio Redistricting Commission and designees, my name is Kathy Brinkman. I have no sausage, I have none. I live in the city of Oxford and that's in the 53rd house district in the fourth Senate district. And I appreciate this opportunity to address you today. I've learned over time that on a day to day basis, decisions made on the local level can have the most impact on my life and that of my family. Although it's vitally important who our president is, who our governor is. The people who represent me at city council and in the Ohio House and Senate will make decisions that either reflect my views or quite contrary to my views, whether the topic is arming teachers in schools or requiring masks indoors or promoting environmental safeguards, how the districts are drawn, impacts who is elected and that impacts us. So I went door to door in our city in the summer and fall of 2017 to gather signatures for the next year's resolution to change the process by which congressional seats are chosen. And I reminded people that Ohio voters passed a measure in 2015. And we've talked about that measure today. We've talked about the fact that 70 percent of voters were in favor of that measure. They knew that it would take them six years before that would have an impact. But that's how engaged they were in the wrong that was done in the drawing of the 2011 maps. They were that upset that they were willing in 2015 to make that commitment for six years later. The 2015 vote was not a solution in search of a problem. It was a direct result of the 2011 map, map... Mapmaking. So the appeal to me and to my neighbors is all the characteristics we've talked about, the fact that communities should not be divided, that regardless of political party in power, that districts be drawn with all voters in mind, whether they be Republican or Democrat or independent, which is a tremendous amount of our community. In addition, an issue that's been referred to just recently is public input and whether we have enough time for that and we need to make enough time for that. It's a book end. You're listening to us now, before maps are made. You need to listen to the public again at the end of this process. [applause] It's important that people have time to react. It's important that this be done out, out in the light. So if I can leave you with one point, it's this. At the end of this process, voters should not be able to discern which party was in the majority when the maps were drawn. [applause] The maps should be that fair and reasonable, so Ohio voters are counting on you. Thank you. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:36:57] And thank you, we have Lynne Miller on deck and Andrea Dannenberg of now. [inaudible] Thank you. Thank you. Appreciate it. Lynn Miller. And on deck is Donna Herbeman.

**Lynn Miller** [00:37:44] My name is Lynn Miller and I live in the Columbia Tuscola neighborhood, which is within the limits of city of Cincinnati. I'm also a member of the League of Women Voters here in Cincinnati. My Ohio House district is District 27, which is made up of several communities within the city of Cincinnati, as well as villages and townships to the north and east, such as Indian Hill, Terrace Park, and Anderson, my neighborhood is concerned with issues related to public transportation, affordable housing development, the need for critical infrastructure repair and treatment and prevention of opiates. Many of the voters in these other villages and townships I mentioned are not as interested in these issues. I believe my district is an example of a gerrymandered district, and I demand that this committee consider how to group all Ohio neighborhoods together in a compact fashion so that our state representatives can more fully represent the voters they are elected to serve. Thank you. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:38:56] Thank you. Donna Herman and Gene Henderson is on the.

**Donna Herman** [00:39:07] My name is Donna Herman. I'm a lifelong resident of Ohio, currently living in New Richmond, Ohio, and an active member of the Community of Reason. In Ohio's 2nd District, too often I have felt my views, as well as the needs of my community, have been underserved because of gerrymandering, resulting in a lack of accountability. For example, at present in Clermont County, we are facing an environmental and economic crisis at the Beckjord and Zimmer power plants. Representatives have turned a blind eye to the lack of oversight regarding the remediation and to its future economic investment in our community. A more representative district will allow for these and other key issues to be fully debated amongst our electorate. Over 70 percent of Ohioans have asked for fair district maps that represent all Ohioans. Please use all the resources available to you to create districts that represent all the people, not just special interests. Thank you. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:40:32] Thank you. And we have now Gene Henderson and on deck is Sherwen Little.

**Jean Henderson** [00:40:44] Being here, thank you for the opportunity to be heard. I'm here today to talk to you about the importance of hearing the collective voices of Ohioans. We want to be at the top of your minds as you work through the redistricting process in a transparent and bipartisan manner. I grew up in northeastern Ohio, down the street from B&O railroad tracks and old dilapidated buildings. As a kid, my favorite activity was sharing National Geographics with my dad, exploring cultures, lands and people from all over the world. Most of the content was awe-inspiring, but it was the articles about people who lost their self-rule that stuck with me. Later, I became a scientist and studied every ology that I could, from zoology to anthropology, observing and appreciating the connectedness of planet, community and people, including the shared struggles of people in societies whose voices were neglected. We find ourselves here today in a society that often is referred to as divided. But I still look for ways that we are connected. We all want our voices to be heard. We want to know that what we think matters. Gerrymandering takes away our voices and what matters to us. It divides us not just by the lines that are drawn on a map to create voting communities, but by the disenfranchisement that it creates when voters voices are diluted, it takes our power to effect change. My congressional district runs from central Hamilton County, 110 miles to almost the southern tip of Ohio through rural counties. Congressional town halls don't often occur in my part of the district. Both rural communities and urban and suburban communities have needs, they're just not the same. I'm here today to ask you to exercise fairness when creating Ohio's districts. Ohioans must know that speaking the truth about our needs won't fall on deaf ears for a political purpose or an upcoming election. We Ohioans have spoken twice in 2015 and in 2018 with over 70 percent support for fairness in the redistricting process, a fairness that will be reflected in the communities where we live, work and strive to be good citizens and neighbors. We want you to hear our voices, listen to the advocates and experts, and create new maps with our best interests in mind. Please show us that you hear us. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:43:26] Thank you very much. Next, we have Sherwin Little and on deck we have Robert Gomez.

**Sherwin Little** [00:43:37] Hi, my name is Sherwin Little and I live in Sharonville, and I'm pleased to have Jessica Miranda as my representative. [applause] I'm a proud career educator in Ohio public schools after retiring, Thank you. After retiring, I'm now the executive director of an educational nonprofit that is based in Ohio that has worldwide membership. We Ohio voters were clear in our demand for open, transparent and nonpartisan process for creating fair legislative maps that reflect the needs of voters, not the partisan whims and wishes of politicians. Gerrymandering by cracking and packing districts has stripped us as voters of our voice, and it has distorted the wishes of Ohioans. This distorts how our tax money is spent and it misrepresents our views on social issues. You have a clear mandate from us. We expect our voice to be heard. Thank you for your time and I look forward to your, to your actions. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:44:47] Thank you. We have Robert Gomez and on deck we have Whitney. Saddiqi. Robert Gomez. Or Whitney Saddiqi? Yes. I hope I didn't butcher the name.

**Whitney Siddiqi** [00:45:22] Can you hear me OK? Good afternoon, members of the Ohio Redistricting Commission. My name is Whitney Siddiqi and I live in Cincinnati. I'm here today testifying on behalf of the Ohio chapter of the Council on American Islamic Relations, known better as CARE Ohio. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to present testimony in favor of equal districts in which every person's vote holds equal weight. As a civil rights and advocacy organization for Ohio Muslims and a proud member of the Ohio Citizens Redistricting Commission and the Equal Districts Coalition, which, by the way, will be releasing citizen inspired maps tomorrow. CARE Ohio has been working for several months to fight for fair maps. Muslims, who are often the subject of political discourse rarely have the opportunity to advocate for themselves. As it stands, Islamophobia, racism and xenophobia pervade our political system, leading to the creation of discriminatory policies and laws. This emphasizes the need for diverse representation among elected officials, at the very least, Muslims should have adequate representation in government that will be accessible and responsive, much less advocate for our needs. That is why we have been working so hard to educate and mobilize our Ohio Muslim communities, which total around 200,000 people in Ohio around this subject, through redistricting, education events in Columbus, Dayton and Cincinnati, we have submitted 100 community maps from citizens to the Ohio Citizens Redistricting Commission. And this really shows our citizens' perspectives of their of their own communities. We have helped numerous community members submit written testimony to this commission, and we continue to have important conversations about redistricting and our political system with Muslims from every background. College students, our future leaders, doctors, community volunteers, parents, religious leaders and young professionals, to name just a few. It's a complex subject, but as soon as people understand how redistricting has diluted their voting power and rigged our elections in Ohio, people become frustrated, appalled and passionate about this subject. This is not the democracy our community members studied in civics class or learned about when immigrating to the United States. [applause] It is critical that as citizens, we understand how redistricting has pushed our nation and specifically Ohio, to the political extremes, leading to predictable election outcomes and disengaged voters and perhaps most significantly, how it has diluted the voting power of marginalized communities by splitting our communities. One example is Cincinnati. I live in the Oakley neighborhood of Cincinnati on the east side. This is a popular up and coming neighborhood for young professionals, young families. My neighborhood and others are included in the 2nd Congressional District, which includes Clermont, Brown, Highland and other counties which I never frequent have no connection to no no offense to them. You know, while one of the mosques that I attend downtown in Clifton, along with the other part of Cincinnati, is included in the 1st Congressional District, both districts have Republican representation in Congress. By splitting Hamilton County, which votes majority Democratic into two congressional districts with surrounding counties that are majority Republican communities, map drawers, have ensured that Cincinnatians could not elect the officials that represent their views and concerns. [applause] Additionally. Additionally, and I'm trying to speak fast, I'm sorry, I'm running up on time, additionally, because of the way previous maps were drawn, parts of Cincinnati are also split into state districts with representatives who do not share the same values as their constituents. For example, the neighborhoods of West Price, East Price Hill and Lower Price Hill have been placed into House District 29, 30 and Senate District eight, which all have white Republican representation despite the fact that these neighborhoods are diverse and vote majority Democratic. No matter which party you're affiliated with, you deserve adequate political representation. My hope for this round of redistricting is that Cincinnati will not be split up in such a way that dilutes the collective voting power of this community. Another example is the division of the large Muslim community that spans West Chester and Mason, just north of Cincinnati. Although there are county and city boundaries, our Muslim community and the broader Mason and Westchester communities are closely connected, living, interacting and using resources across both areas. They are members of both the Islamic Center of Greater Cincinnati and Westchester and the Islamic Center of Mason. They go to halal grocery stores and restaurants in both areas and send their children to school across both areas, including the Islamic school in Westchester, which serves the entire greater Cincinnati region. Our Muslim community in this area has shared interest and resources, yet are split between House districts, House districts 52 and 53, Senate districts four and seven, and the 1st and 8th congressional districts. This makes it impossible for minority communities to advance issues which matter to them and affect their daily lives. This suppression of political power is especially harmful for communities who are racial and religious minorities, experience institutional discrimination at a higher rate and are typically not engaged at all by elected officials. Ohio politicians have proven that they will act in their own self-interest rather than advancing the needs of their constituents. This is evident in the ways this supposedly public process has been undermined. Thus far, we have seen this commission and Governor DeWine seriously challenged the spirit of the redistricting reforms Ohioans overwhelmingly voted for. These public hearings were scheduled a week before the first deadline and during work and school hours for most Ohioans. The process to submit testimony was quietly announced three days before the first hearing, and several commissioners have been skipping these hearings altogether. Fair maps come from a fair process and we are deeply concerned that is not what we're getting here today. We are constantly hearing about the extreme divides in America. This would not be the case if our districts were drawn fairly, if our elections were truly competitive, and if every vote, especially those of marginalized communities like the Muslim community, had equal voting power. Thank you for your time today. I had a few community members that wish to be here, but cannot be. I have some excerpts from their testimony, but I'm assuming run up on time. So thank you so much for listening. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:52:40] Thank you very much. You did run over on time. Yes, one of the commissioners has just arrived, the state auditor, Keith Faber. That did go a little over the time, so give you some idea as plenty of time to to talk when we don't want to cut anybody off. So please, self-police, when we down to one minute, the staff person will raise the one minute sign. So you will be able to comply easily. [staff holds up sign] (laughter & clapping). Right now, we have David Nevin and on deck, John McCowen.

**David Niven** [00:53:38] Thank you. I speak today is a political science professor who has studied published academic research and testified as an expert witness in federal court on gerrymandering. Despite what you've been hearing from the doom and gloomers here about gerrymandering in Ohio. I'm here to speak facts without hyperbole. So let me reassure you, Ohio does not have the most gerrymandered legislative map in the United States. It has the second most gerrymandered legislative map (clapping) in the United States. Only Tennessee Republicans have a legislative map that would award them more seats by virtue of winning fewer votes than Ohio Republicans. Ohio Republicans enjoy the favor of a map that secures more than 60 percent of statehouse and Senate seats without the hassle of needing to win a majority of the votes cast. With Ohio's maps its heads–Republicans win, tails–Republicans win. And in the unlikely event, the quarter lands on its edge and never falls over, Republicans win. But we are not here about the maps we hear about the governing. We're here about the diminishment of people's voices. I did a quick analysis of state legislatures across the country. I compared the influence of voters versus the influence of maps. And when you line them up side by side, the degree to which a state legislative map is gerrymandered is a better predictor of state legislative policies than the voting preferences of the people. [applause] Just think about that for a moment, the map matters more than the people. The map matters more than people...Ohioans, as you know, have overwhelmingly called for policies like a commitment to stem gun violence, policies like background checks. For gun purchases, the legislature takes no action, in fact, legislature goes in the opposite direction. How could an elected body have such little interest in the priorities of the people? The map matters more than the people. President John Adams once said, as the happiness of the people is the sole end of government, so the consent of the people is the only foundation of it. Notice he didn't say the talents of mapmakers are the foundation of government. The consent that is so essential to a healthy government can only be found in fair districts with fair voting. I urge this commission to rise above the debilitating notion that fairness is a sucker's bet. Fairness is baked into the bedrock of the nation's founding, fairness is woven into the Constitution, fairness is not a threat to your political success, but the best measure of it. Thank you. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:56:53] Thank you. Thank you, John McGowen and on....close? Don't embarrass me, like, come on up. Yes, yes, sir. [laughter] And on on deck, we have Mr. Robert Drake.

**John McGowan** [00:57:11] I'll take less than four minutes. I'm a resident of Hamilton County. I have not had representation at the federal level representatives at all in my lifetime. Part of it was 50 years ago, Hamilton County was heavily Republican. My father was a Republican. Then what happened, white flight happened to Hamilton County, they lost population and the suburbs grew. So what happens then, the redistricting has long split Hamilton County, we know that it was done on purpose. It was to say Hamilton County at the time with your 800000 population, don't count. So what were we left with? This is my opinion. We have elected a bigot. Who trots out his campaign promises every two years and he keeps his base. We had a very wealthy banker who got his health care through the federal government and his pension, but vigorously opposed universal health care for everyone. That's what we got. Why did that happen? We let it happen. We don't use critical thinking, Republicans, Democrats, you have to use critical thinking for determining what's best. If we had used it, we wouldn't have more than 600000 people dead because of the virus. Oh, everything's OK, said the president in February. Was it no. So the next time you're at the ballot box, don't think Republicans don't think Democrats think critical thinking, do the people on that ballot represent my critical thinking? Thank you. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:59:59] Thank you, Mr. Robert Drake, and on deck we have Thomas Zino.

**Robert Drake** [01:00:08] There's a whole lot that's been said... I don't have a lot to say that hasn't already been said is what I mean to say. One of the points that was brought up by one of the speakers is how this gerrymandered system we have encourages extremism. And you see that, I mean, we have people in Congress who would be elected again if the election were held today that were in favor of basically committing sedition against the United States and overthrowing our system of government. What's up with that? I mean, I would like to ask the commissioners something in general. Now, you all know that in Ohio, I think Republicans probably got about 55 percent of the vote and yet have 75 percent of the Ohio Senate seats. Is that right? I would like to see you raise your hands. If you think that's fair, equitable and does not show any bias whatsoever, just raise your hands. So you don't think it's fair? So get with the program. Thank you. [applause].

**Thomas Zeno** [01:01:29] Good afternoon. I'm from Glendale. Um, the current shape of the boundaries of the state and federal districts is embarrassing. Ohio voted twice for President Obama and twice for President Trump. This commission needs to make a fair map for everyone, for Democrats, for Republicans and for independents. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:02:11] James O'Reilly on deck, James O'Reilly on deck.

**Jean Henderson** [01:02:19] And welcome to the commission to the beautiful city of Cincinnati, [applause] and I appreciate your attention today. I was born and raised in Hamilton County. I have resided with my family in this county since 1972 and have been a homeowner in the Clifton neighborhood since 1976. After 45 years as a high school science teacher, I retired in 2018. I love my city and I love the Ohio River Valley. I believe strongly that good citizenship begins with exercising my right to vote and to be heard by elected officials. I believe that the strength of local communities ensures a sense of belonging among its citizens. That incentivizes them to be actively engaged in political processes, the fundamental step in maintaining a democracy. Gerrymandering districts through political map making erodes the political spirit of our local communities. Fair districting is a major step to rebuild citizen involvement, especially among the generations younger than my own. Two of my three sons have chosen to remain in Cincinnati. They both live and work within the city. They and many of their friends speak about their disenchantment with the Ohio legislature politics. They are tired of the corruption and the polarized nature of the discourse. Their children are young. They worry about what a future in Ohio holds for them. I stay in touch with many of my former students. They have a way of circling around to talk to their chemistry teacher with news of college courses, career advancement and job choices. So many of them do not want to stay in Ohio because of the uncertainty in leadership at the statehouse. How do I defend my belief that engagement and candidate selection and support as well as voting is a way to achieve the leadership they wish to see? I believe it is by standing before this commission today to ask for fair districts, districts that are compact and reflect the community and both culture and concerns. The maps that are created over the next few months are the big step toward forward... Step forward in juicing up the enthusiasm for government across the 88 counties of our state and across the many generations that call Ohio home. I believe these maps are a crucial step in revitalizing local community interest in their government; city, township, and state. Thank you for your time. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:05:35] Thank you. We'd like to allow a new state representative who just joined us, would you stand and just introduce yourself, please, real quick? [appplause] Mr. O'Reilly. I have to admit, this is very, very frustrating to me, you know, uh, I haven't served in the majority in such a long time. [laughter] And when I chaired committees, I had control over the microphone, you know. And several other things and now come to the University of Cincinnati and they take the control of the microphone away from me. I finally get a chance to chair the committee again, and I'm just. So thank you for cutting it on, I appreciate it. Mr. David Pepper on deck and, uh, James O'Reilly.

**James O'Reilly** [01:06:46] I've kept students awake at this university for 41 years. [laughter] I've been a city councilman for 20 years in the city of Wyoming, Ohio, and I've been on the executive committee of our regional council governments for about 10 years. So I have some background in teaching these five words. The five words are keep him in his tomb, keep him in his tomb. 10 days ago while on vacation, walking on Tremont Street in Boston. I was surprised to see the ancient plaque marking the home of Eldridge Gerry. He was the governor who arranged for his Federalist Party to exclude other parties by carving the district north of Boston into the shape of a salamander. What Eldridge Gerry did then was an odd shaped line. He would roll over in his grave looking at some of the things you've done in Hamilton County. Why are we dealing with redistricting? Why isn't it simple? I beg you to keep him buried in his tomb. I beg you to turn away from the picking and choosing of winners and losers, because we in the city of Wyoming and of course, I'm speaking as an individual, without a vote of the city council entirely. We in the city of Wyoming want to keep Mr. Gerry in Boston in that tomb. Because there are great people in the Portsmouth area of southeastern Ohio, great people. But their rural economy and their needs are quite different than that very small portion of the far end of the second district, which is the city of Wyoming. Why put Wyoming and the Portsmouth area into the same 2nd Congressional District of Ohio? Why? What is the mileage? What is the rationale? What is the honest reason for linking the people between these two cities? Well, Eldridge is laughing. He's in his grave, but he's laughing at how badly Ohio has been gerrymandered. So while we're at it, let's look at the bizarre strip of Interstate 275. Look in the map, Interstate 275. It's a very small strip that allows the western suburbs owned by Congressman Steve Chabot and the Warren County facilities and residents that are supportive of Chabot. Looking at that group that that Chabot strip group, ask them, did they really want him as their congressperson? Did they really choose him? And making this county more logically representative is not to insult the individuals. Steve was a great third grade school teacher before he ran for Cincinnati City Council and before he ran for Congress. But Steve Chabot is not representative of our district. There's a very fine Hyde Park, Cincinnati foot doctor whose parents and I got along very well. He OK, one minute remaining. OK, so they're both good people. The podiatrist is a good person and the teacher is a good person, but they're not representative. Make this make this representative, please. And I'll just speak quickly about the state boundaries. I wish you would do this better. Please measure. Please look at the district boundaries with mathematically defensible measurement. It makes great sense for us to apply logic to the new census data. I'm sorry that you waited so long that the process is so compressed. I hope you will respond logically to the rational and fair need for configurations. Thank you for listening and please keep Eldridge Gerry in his tomb. Thank you. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:10:52] Thank you very much. I believe we have another state representative in the room. [applause] Mr. David Pepper, you're up. And Christine Woodworth is on deck.

**David Pepper** [01:11:24] Secretary, Mr. Auditor and others, I'm David, brings a little pepper with your sausage here today from Wyoming. It's great to be here. Thank you everyone else for being here, this is your process, so it's great to see such a great turnout today. This... Both districting measures passed with 70 percent of the vote because promises were made that, quote, districts will put an end to the partisanship of the past. The process, it was promised, would reinvigorate our republic. And it starts with fair legislative districting. Ohio's efforts were held out as a shining example that good governance is possible when partisanship takes a back seat. As one official said, I want my party to win elections because we have better candidates and better ideas, not because we use modern GIS mapping software and pinpoint accurate polling data to draw district lines. For example, this person said large cities like Cleveland, Cincinnati will remain whole within their districts. [applause] This was Secretary Frank LaRose as a state senator talking about these issues. The secretary, we hope you'll fulfill those now that you're on this commission. The secretary also promised that significant measures are taken to assure that the process is transparent throughout and inclusive of public input when it's time to draw the maps. Now, a few people have mentioned that some people haven't been at these hearings and others have said it's really late to get this going. I have a sneaking suspicion it's been going, but not at these hearings, so I don't have a lot of time. I want to ask Secretary LaRose, have you been at private meetings discussing maps in this process? Yes or no? Auditor Faber, have you been at private meetings?

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:13:25] Could I have the mic, please? Uh. Mr. Chairman, if you would. We listen to get information from you, please, if you would.

**David Pepper** [01:13:41] I think this is the most important information in this hearing. [applause] I'm under no illusion that meetings have not been taking place throughout this process in private. And so if I can't ask these questions, I hope the media will, I hope everyone who sees the gentleman and women... And I am asking the Republicans, because there's a pattern here that we saw 10 years ago, what meetings have taken place? What's the schedule of those meetings? When were they? Where were they, what was discussed, what mirrored materials were shared, what maps are already circulating, what private contractors are being used to do this work? Are you claiming privilege on some of these materials? You have draft... Draft maps out there. Have they been circulated to Congresspeople already like they were 10 years ago? When do you expect the maps to be done? Now, in case this sounds a little over the top? I am describing exactly what happened 10 years ago. By this point, they had already had seven, at least seven private meetings in a hotel room in Columbus, they called the bunker. They they had staff resign from being state house staff to work as private contractors. They had circulated multiple maps at this point. John Boehner was in on it all. The schedule made clear that they had the whole map, quote, in the can until the last minute and then rush it through. You know, the result of that process? Today when Ohio crossed four thousand new cases of covid, one hundred miles north, they're debating whether to get rid of vaccine requirements of all vaccines, not just covid. That's what a gerrymandered legislature does. Auditor Faber. You suggested that city council members were committing dereliction of duty by not following Sunshine Law at city council, but here we had the most important process in the state of Ohio, drawing our maps for the next decade, occurring not here, but in secret. I call on all of you to insist that your meetings, discussing every aspect of this be brought into the sunshine. That's how we will get it right. [applause] That's how we will get it right. [inaudble] Pointed out rightfully with City Hall, the law of Ohio Sunshine is very clear: public officials who take official action must conduct all deliberations upon official business only in open meetings unless the subject matters specifically exempted by law. I cannot imagine a more important public matter than the drawing of our democracy for the next decade. Nothing is as important as that. And so I hope you'll live up to your words, your actions. Mr. Brinkman, you've been an open meeting to advocate your entire career. Let's bring the process public and let all of us watch not just the very end, but the whole darn process. Thank you all very much. I appreciate it. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:17:22] If I could have your attention, I would like people who are making presentations to actually speak through the chair, if you would, please, and or to the total panel, we're not trying to, uh, uh, call out anyone on this list. We we're not challenging you. This is not a debate. And we don't expect you to challenge us necessarily other than to do what we have sworn to do and to produce fair districts here in the state of Ohio. So thank you very much. Miss Christine Woodworth is up in Jihad khan is on deck.

**Kristine Woodworth** [01:18:07] Yeah, you couldn't have called me before. David, thanks. David. Yeah, I'm Kristine Woodworth, I'm a resident of Columbia-Tusculum also, and I just like to say thank you to Linda Ford for teaching my kids chemistry all those years ago. Those are two kids who left Ohio and are not coming back. But in any case, that's not what my testimony is about. I in Columbia-Tusculum four miles from downtown. In fact, from my front window, I can see downtown Cincinnati. I can walk to Lunken Airport, I can walk to Hyde Park Square. I grocery shop at Hyde Park Plaza, shop at Rookwood, eat out in East Walnut Hills and exercise in Oakley. My community is filled with apartments as well as condos and single family homes and the racial age and economic diversity that I see when I go to my local grocery store or the coffee shop is one of the reasons that I really love where I live. I consider myself very much a part of urban Cincinnati and I'm within the city limits of Cincinnati. But my home is in a tiny, teeny teeny portion, the tail of Ohio House District 27 and State Senate District 7. I don't know if you can see it, but I am right here in this little green circle. Little green circle. My statehouse district includes Mount Carmel and Loveland, my state house district... Or my state Senate district extends almost all the way to Dayton, Ohio, with all of Warren County and a portion of Middletown included. I could literally walk into downtown Cincinnati or for that matter, Dayton, Kentucky, in the time that it would take me to drive to the opposite end of my state Senate district. Clearly, my diverse urban community is not reflected in that state Senate district, and that means we don't have the representation that we deserve. In 2011, I was honestly one of those people who didn't pay a lot of attention to the statehouse. I probably could not have told you who my state rep and state senator were, embarrassing as that is to me today. But I remember vividly my reaction to the process when the redistricting was done that year, when I heard about the bunker, when I read about that in the newspaper, I started paying attention. And you guys who did that that year, you created an activist. [applause] Over the over the next decade, it became clear that the secret map drivers had done their job well. The extreme gerrymandering of 2011 has given us a GOP super majority in both houses in the state legislature, in which very few seats have changed party in the past decade when I've been paying attention. When lawmakers know the voters cannot throw them out, they become emboldened to craft and pass ever more extreme legislation catering to a smaller and louder minority in an effort not to be outflanked in a primary. [applause] For the past eight years, I have been an active volunteer in the nonpartisan gun violence prevention movement. I can see the effects of statewide disenfranchisement in that work. My work often takes me to the state House for... for hearings, and I watch a lot of The Ohio Channel. I have many examples, but perhaps the clearest is criminal background checks on all gun sales. Poll after poll shows the percentage of Ohioans who favor updating background checks to include gun show and online sales is 90 percent. Yes, nine out of ten, which is by definition a bipartisan majority. And every every session, a bill to do this is introduced in both chambers by members of the minority caucus. And every session these bills do not even get a hearing in our house. I've actually had conversations with GOP lawmakers who tell me that they are in favor of the bill, but if they advocate for it or co-sponsor it, they're going to be primaried and the next guy will be worse than me. And that that is what they have told me to my face. So this dynamic plays out with every other piece of gun violence legislation as well, with members of the super majority fairly tripping over each other to submit more and more extreme bills that the majority of Ohioans do not want while the toll of gun violence rises unabated. But they're immune from electoral consequences as long as they stay to the right of their primary opponent. Gerrymandered districts leading to supermajorities in a state that is more like 55-45 are not in the best interest of our state. That is why in 2016, we fought back against the backroom, secretive drawing of partisan maps by working for and passing the reform that established this commission. And that's why we voted more than two to one in favor of a transparent and open process to draw compact districts that do not favor or disfavor a political party. I strongly urge you to do your solemn duty and uphold the spirit as well as the letter of this reform. I'm not the only Ohioan who has been awakened to the dangers of partisan gerrymandering since 2011. And we're watching you. Thank you. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:23:43] Jihad Khan and on deck, we have Christine Karlee.

**Jihad Khan** [01:23:50] Hello, my name is Jihad Khan, I'm a fourth year student here at the University of Cincinnati and I have lived in Westchester area for almost 16 years now. I'm a proud member of the Muslim American and Indian American community. And I have seen the impact of gerrymandering mostly in the last couple of years as I voted for the first time in the last presidential election. When looking at those local candidates, I could not see anybody that represented me. A lot of them were one candidate options. There wasn't even an option for me to see the differences in issues. And this this reduces the impact of my vote and my voice in the local government. And this lack of representation in my elected officials also discourages me and others in my community from participating in the democratic process. This is a serious issue. I can see it. As well as lack of participation reduces the effectiveness of the local democracy to improve society, which is what the overall goal is. And then about the process. And we've heard a lot about it today, the current redistricting process is unfair and undemocratic. There definitely needs to be a more... definitely needs to be more emphasis on getting everyone's voice, voices heard. These public hearings are a great start, obviously, but it's unacceptable that there is only one hearing for each major region and that it's in the middle of the workday. I wasn't even going to be here to begin with. I only got lucky that my professor canceled my lab that was at this time. So I think you can see that in the audience as well. There needs to be a little bit more representation from the entire demographic of this area. For the sake of preserving the democratic process for future generations the redistricting process needs to be expanded to allow for more citizen participation. Thank you very much. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:26:12] Christina Carley and Joe Henning on the.

**Christine Carley** [01:26:21] Good afternoon. Thank you so much for your time. My name is Christine Karley and I'm a resident of the Columbia-Tusculum neighborhood in Cincinnati, Ohio. I'm here today because I love Ohio and I feel like it's my duty as a citizen to express how deeply concerned I am about Ohio's future, if if the redistricting reform reforms voters overwhelmingly approved in 2015 and 2018 are not followed in an earnest and transparent manner. For the record, I'm not registered with a political party. I've always been an independent voter whose political leanings really have nothing to do with my grave concerns about Ohio's deeply gerrymandered districts. You know, I'm like everybody else here. I'm an American who learned in school from an early age that a representative government isn't supposed to operate the way it does in Ohio today. I was taught in school and the gerrymandering in any form, for any reason grossly undermines our democracy and endangers our rights. And indeed it does. My interest in redistricting began 10 years ago, like so many people here after the maps were drawn in 2011. And I was shocked to witness candidates with very extreme political views win primaries and head to office without any competition at all. And without competition, there is not accountability. As an independent voter and a political centrist, I felt completely alienated by Ohio's political process, both at the state and congressional levels. I knew my voice wasn't valued and even worse, my vote didn't matter because mathematically speaking, the incumbents in my district could not lose. It was then that I realized how deliberately undemocratic our redistricting process had become. So again, like so many people here, I educated myself on how our maps are drawn, and I discovered the very ugly truth about how big data, partisan interests, and a veil of secrecy combined in 2011 to subvert the will of Ohio voters and create the most gerrymandered districts our state has ever seen. So I'm so thankful that so many Ohioans like me said enough is enough and we've worked to correct this miscarriage of justice with our statewide constitutional reforms. But now it's incumbent upon you, the commission, to administer these reforms with transparency, fairness and true impartiality. So to that end, I ask the commission to schedule and promote statewide public hearings in an open and accessible manner following the release of the proposed maps. This will allow all Ohioans to actively participate in the mapmaking process. Now I realize the timeline is less than ideal, but we knew that all along. And the people of Ohio deserve the commission's full commitment to ensuring the process is open to public review and feedback. Furthermore, I expect the members of the commission to uphold their oaths to the people of Ohio and work in a bipartisan fashion to follow both the spirit and the letter of redistricting reform. As you are well aware, and it's been said many times, nearly 75 percent of Ohio voters approve these reforms in all of Ohio's 88 counties. Those numbers exemplify bipartisan support for reform. So please do your job and honor the will of Ohio voters and ensure fair districts in 2021. Thank you so much for your time. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:29:40] Thank you, Joe Henning and Dana Miller on deck.

**Jolynne Henning** [01:29:49] Hello, my name is Jolynn Henning. After all that eloquent voices raised today, there are only a few things you need to know about me. I've lived in the Cincinnati area, Mariemont, specifically for 27 years, which in Cincinnati means that I'm a newcomer. [laughter] I have never before been moved to participate in a government hearing. I have watched with growing dismay as my concerns as a first string suburban resident, a wife, a mother of four, trying to raise children who treat others fairly and with respect, who care about our environment and also care about the health of our beautiful city. While those concerns are ignored by the representatives and senators who supposedly represent my interests. A district is not fair if urban and first string suburban residents are split up in order to dilute the impact of their votes. That is not fair. The voters of Ohio spoke in 2015 and 2018, asking for an end to gerrymandering. It is my hope that you listen to the majority of Ohio voters. Thank you. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:31:28] Dana Miller is up and on deck is Sandy Sommer

**Dana Miller** [01:31:37] Thank you, Chairman Sykes and members of the committee commission for allowing me to speak today. My name is Dana Miller. I live in Oxford up in Butler County, and I come to you as a citizen of the state. I lived in Seattle, Washington, from 1988 to 2012. Seattle is located in King County, where I took for granted that a voter's guide and mail-in ballots would be sent to me by the Board of Elections. I was dismayed when I moved to Oxford in August 2012 and there was no easy to understand, thorough and balanced voter's guide mailed to me before every election. And of course, no mail-in ballots to drop into one of the 73 ballot boxes like there is in King County. I can say the future of democracy can be seen in King County, but not all people want that future. I have learned this non-democratic fact clearly living in the Buckeye State. I felt most in the dark politically in Butler County, and there was a reason why, and it is by design. What I have learned is my vote is not proportionally represented as one person, one vote in the Ohio State and national legislatures. My vote and the votes of my community in Oxford have been diluted in federal and state elections for years. The reason my vote doesn't count, I have learned from the good professor, is that Ohio has the second most grotesquely gerrymandered legislative districts in the country and I live in one of them. Ohio Republicans from gerrymandered districts are proposing laws to suppress access to the ballot box, control access to honest historical education, and not allowing a true accounting of the coup attempt of January 6th. Gerrymandering on neither side leads to polarization, and now the effect is tearing the country apart. I also feel quite in the dark about public input into the Ohio redistricting process. I put many hours of work over the past few months just to figure out how to get here today and to be speaking with you and the luxury of having a job where I can take a day off to be here. It doesn't take much to figure out that many people in power want the public to be kept in the dark about the redistricting process. For a start, there must be proposed maps made available well before public input. There needs to be at least five months of more time for public outreach and comment to have any meaningful citizen input into this process. The pandemic and delayed census data have only provided cover for those who want to continue to skulk in the dark. And we also know we're all kidding ourselves, because the only fair way to do this is to have an independent commission such as the state of Washington and many other states. [applause] I have learned there are a few simple rules for fair map drawing, I'll just mention one for the sake of time, compactness and uniformity of districts with equal population in the districts. Using these rules. In a few hours, I drew my own version of the state legislative maps and I've included them in my testimony. I believe my redrawing of the districts represents my community better. I'm a student of history, and I know the path of creating an authoritarian, non-democratic state and one of the tools is the divide and conquer methods of gerrymandering, which lead to cynicism and apathy. I can see and feel this totalitarian machinery in action here in Ohio. I'm asking you to support the transparent, fair and honest process of redrawing the Ohio maps. With a robust period of public engagement, which will put you on the right side of history instead of fighting against it. Thank you for your time. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:35:56] Thank you. We... We may have had that submitted on the Internet. [inaudible] We haven't pulled those down. We don't have a copy. No. [inaudible]

**Auditor of State Keith Faber** [01:36:18] I'd like to see that.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:36:38] Ok. They'll be available on the website. The Sandy Sommer and Ken Hawley.

**Sandy Sommer** [01:36:55] Hi, I'll be very brief. My name is Sandy Sommer. I born and raised here in Ohio, actually born here in Hamilton County, presently live in Mount Adams. I want to thank you today for having this hearing. And the commission and the general legislature must honor the voters who voted twice to end gerrymandering. Elections should be determined by the voters and not by gerrymandered boundaries. We, the public, must have public hearings all along this process, which I think you've heard loud and clear today, and there should be no surprises when the final map is approved. Thank you. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:37:40] Ken. Yes. And we have Mr. Brian Griffin on deck.

**Ken Hawley** [01:37:55] Until fairly recently, I considered myself to be a third generation Republican. I was born in Hyde Park neighborhood, grew up there, live there now. I say I was... Until recently considered myself to be a third generation Republican because I have come recently to vow I will never vote for another Republican official for any office, probably for as long as I live because of what Republicans are doing to our country. For generations, the world has looked to America as the shining light of democracy, where we get to choose our government and our government is responsive to the will and the votes of the people. Republicans used to do things like the National Highway Transportation System and the Republicans pushed the Voting Rights Act of 1965 over the over the top Republicans vote pushed the 1964 Civil Rights bill over the top. Republicans pushed the Americans with Disabilities Act over the top. Republicans pushed the Environmental Protection Act over the top. They pushed the Clean Air Act over the top. They pushed the Clean Water Act over them over the top. They did so much to help to better the lives of all Americans. There was a time when I was proud to say that I was a Republican. As a Republican, we were considered to be fiscally conservative, but socially moderate. We stayed out of people's bedrooms. We stayed out of their sex lives, their personal lives, and we paid for those programs that we felt helped better all Americans through a fair and progressive tax system. When I was young, my father, a physician, told me that my grandfather probably paid more in taxes than he made...than my father made in a year. And that was back in the days when there was a 90 percent top marginal tax rate. We certainly don't advocate that. But this idea that corporations and billionaires should pay no taxes, while all of us here pay for politicians whom we did not choose, whose policies we do not want, and whose programs are injurious to all of us. We can swim in the river sometimes now. We couldn't do that without a tetanus shot when I was a child. We don't hear smog reports, the weather reports like we used to. We used to be able to vote and vote freely and fairly. We now have Republicans, powerful Republicans, emulating and praising people like Vladimir Putin, Erdogan of Turkey, Orban of Hungary. Even North Korea. Do we want to be that shining light of democracy that the world used to look up to? Does anybody look up to the government of Hungary today as something that we want to emulate? Now, it offends me as a former Republican that Hamilton County would vote 57 percent Democratic. And you end up with Steve Chabot and and and Brad Wenstrup. [applause] I'm happy with my. State representative. I'm lucky in that way, but most of these people are not. I don't see anybody here yet who has stood up for gerrymandering. One needs only look... Watch the news every day today to see the ill effects of gerrymandering. There's a lot of attention paid to voter suppression efforts. The worst offender, though, is gerrymandering. Because you try to suppress someone's vote, it's just going to make them mad more likely to come out and vote. Gerrymandering means it doesn't matter whether you come out and vote or not. You're not going to win. The other side is we are rapidly... And it is not hyperbole to say we are rapidly moving towards one party minority rule, which is authoritarian fascism. [applause] And when Republicans who claim to be conservative say it's OK to overthrow the results of an election and to overthrow the government of the United States and they call themselves conservative, when is overthrowing the government of the United States conservative? When did that happen? How did that happen? Gerrymandering. That's how it happened. You have a mission, the voters of all 88 counties in Ohio. Um, um, told you by overwhelming majorities what your role is and you need to honor the spirit. Do not spit in the faces of these voters, the 70 percent or more in all 88 counties who said we want free and fair elections, free and fair districts. Thank you. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:44:10] Thank you very much. Thank you. We have Kurt Grossman. No, no. My mistake, Brian Griffin. Yes, yes, please come forward.

**Ken Poleyeff** [01:44:35] My name is Ken Poleyeff from Landon, Deerfield Township in Warren County. I want to thank you the members of this commission for the opportunity to speak. I'm a retired software engineer, and because of that, I have the privilege to be able to be here at this time to to address you. The current district's maps are such that our representation, our representatives are not representing the interests of the citizens of Ohio in proportion to their population. As a result of gerrymandering, lawmakers see themselves in safe districts and no longer need to represent the needs of their constituents. Instead, it seems their agenda is set by their large donors that results in things like this. A couple of years ago, the state legislature decided to impose a $200 a year fee on electric cars and a $100 a year fee on hybrid cars. Did did some constituent ask for that? Was there somebody lobbying for that? Where did this come from? Whose interest that serve? Why are Ohioans who are making a responsible choice being penalized, sometimes paying a premium to do so? Why is energy efficient transportation being disincentivized? Another example, a few years back, the state government delayed the renewable portfolio standard by two years. That's a pretty obscure thing. The effect of this obscure provision was to destroy a significant incentive to install solar panels. [applause] Where did this idea come from, who benefited? I seriously doubt that that came from a constituent of the Ohio legislature. Those are just two examples, we need fair districts to ensure that all Ohioans can have their voices represented in the state federal legislatures in proportion to their populations and that our legislatures legislate... Our representatives stay engaged in representing their constituents, not large donors. Please ensure that the new proposed district maps meet the well understood criteria of district drawing, compactness, continuity, community integrity, etc., as well as the intent of the voter referenda that no party is favored or disfavored by those maps. Thank you.

[01:47:23] We want to ask Brian,

**Ken Poleyeff** [01:47:25] Brian Griffin that thank you. Hello, yes, my name is Brian Griffin, and most of what I was prepared to say. Has been said and probably better than I would have, I'm a firm believer that none of us is as smart as all of us, and this collective consciousness in this room points to the very, very obvious. I do want to point out that that's been mentioned a couple of times, that this is like making sausage and having come from southeastern Ohio, where my mom went to school with Bob Evans and I rode his horses and I fished his ponds, that I might know a thing or two about making sausage. The most important thing about making sausage is the process. There are sausages you would not want to eat. And this is looking a lot like one of those. So what I would ask is that you think about some of the things you've done and perhaps maybe overlooked will go with overlooked. I am a proud UFCW Local 75 member. I stand with approximately 35,000 other hardworking Cincinnatians who cannot be in this room. Because to be in this room would have cost them real money that would have paid for real food for real children. So I asked you to think about your process and whether or not you alone in your exclusive places will be the only ones who receive any sausage that's worthy of eating. I have not much else to offer, but I will tell you, the odds of working people are on you. We arewatching. Thank you. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:49:30] Thank you. We have a Kurt Grossman. And on deck, we have Christopher Zander.

**Kurt Grossman** [01:49:41] An almost evening, I'm Kurt Grossman, I'm a candidate for Cincinnati City Council and I live in downtown Cincinnati. I've been voting for almost 50 years in Ohio and increasingly what I see as a government that picks its voters rather than its voters picking its government. If you want proof of that, 70 percent of the people in this state said they want common sense gun laws. The state took the 30 percent route. 70 percent or more of the people in this state said they wanted green energy, renewable energy. [applause] The state legislature followed the 30 percent or less and went the other way. 70 percent or more of the people in the state said, get the hell out of our bedrooms and out of our sex lives, 30 percent won. And that wins because of gerrymandering. This time, however, we hope you have to listen, because this vote, the redistricting wasn't just an opinion, it wasn't just the poll. We voted, and we voted twice to tell you to stop misbehaving. Now, I was told by some people I trust that this particular legislation was not actually a good act, it was a cover and it was not going to work well. I ask you, please, to prove them wrong and make us safe. Thank you. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:51:18] Christopher Zander and then on deck would be Richard Alexander.

**Christopher Zander** [01:51:24] Hello, hello, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is Christopher Zander. I live and vote in the 28th District in Redding, but I've also lived in Dublin suburb of Columbus, which is in the 21st District, and in Medina, which is the 69th District. In fact, I recall going to third grade with Bill Batchelder's daughter when I lived in Medina. I'm here today to stress to the importance of creating fair competitive maps. While the 28th isn't the most gerrymandered district in Ohio, one only needs to look at some of the other districts in southwest Ohio to see what the lines are drawn to favor reelection of certain parties by wide margins. I believe that much of the division we see today between the two major parties is the end result of using partisan maps with the primary election system. I believe that on average, one a given district is safe for one party candidate only has to compete within one party for reelection, resulting in tacking further right or left in order to remain relevant. When a ... when a politician's position has been stretched to the extreme and made instantly referencable thanks to technology, it's nearly impossible to cooperate with the other party without instantly being challenged as a flip flopper, traitor to the party or worse. If we can make our districts less partisan, political actors are forced to moderate themselves to remain electable. I believe this moderation can be difficult to do and therefore results in better candidates. It's a simple task to garner the most attention or applause by taking an extreme position that plays to a certain ideology and is to have a nuanced position that takes edge cases and exceptions into account. Argue that a good legislature, a good legislator, must be capable of nuance and must see that there are exceptional circumstances that must be accounted for when creating, debating and voting on laws. Hopefully, those of you that are listening to the voters today have those characteristics, regardless of how your districts are currently drawn. If partisan maps continue to be produced, time will be wasted in court as bad maps are contested and people will continue to lose faith in the system. Maybe you will find a way to win the day and get and sneak something through. But I warn you, this is not an issue that is going to go away. I think you can see by the number of people that are here today that the voters of Ohio are tired of gridlock. We're tired of gerrymandering. We want politicians who represent us and who represent the best of us, not the loudest of us. This is an issue where you will be held to account because our democracy depends on it. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:54:08] Richard Alexander and Jason Spanair go on the.

**Richard Alexander** [01:54:16] Thank you, and I'd ask maybe I was in the other room and nobody heard who the commission was there, the technical difficulties first 10 minutes was blanked out. So nobody knows who you are. Who all is here?

**Clerk** [01:54:35] I'll borrow this from senator. Yes sir - co-chair Senator Vernon Sykes. Representative Tom Brinkman, designee for Speaker Cupp. Matt Donahue, designee for Governor Mike DeWine, Alex Bilchak, designee for well, we have Auditor Keith Faber, Secretary Frank LaRose, Representative Jessica Miranda, designee for leader of Emilia Sykes. And Senator Louis Blessing, designee for President Matt Huffman. Thank you.

**Richard Alexander** [01:55:19] Is this on? There you go. So my name is Dick Alexander. I'm currently represented in the House District 28 and Senate District 8. I am a resident of the village of Indian Hill. People have been very eloquent here, but I want to make sure my statements in here. The foundation of our democracy is based on the concept that our political representation... Representatives reflect the values, concerns and interests of the community in which they live. A gerrymandered district designed to give political advantage to one party or another does not create community representation, but rather political advantage under the window dressing of democracy. Gerrymandering is destroying our democracy and our ability to govern with a sense of community and societal responsibility. We are creating noncompetitive districts, widening the ideological divide and destroying our ability to govern through consensus and community interest. Noncompetitive districts serve only to radicalize and harden positions reflected by the far right and the far left. I live in Indian Hill as I said before. My political community is the village of Indian Hill. My educational community is the Indian Hill School District, which includes portions of Kenwood, Camp Denison and Indian Hill, obviously. The business community where I shop and buy groceries or the local merchants in Madeira, Madisonville, Kenwood and Mariemont. My larger identity is with the city of Cincinnati. My representation by my elected leaders should reflect this community. It does not. I live in District 28, House District 28, which does not include the rest of Indian Hill, but rather includes Kenwood, Blue Ash, Springdale and Forest Park. My neighbor literally across the street. This is a small, sleepy suburban street, literally across the street is represented by District 27, which includes Anderson, Mount Washington, Cherry Grove and portions of Hyde Park. My Senate District 8 is no better. Again, my neighbor across the street is in District seven, which includes all of Indian Hill, except for me for some reason, Lebanon and parts of Middletown. Middletown. District eight, where I live, includes Blue Ash, Bridgetown, Mack, I don't even know where Mack is, Harrison and the communities along the Indiana border. I live on the east side of town. Why am I represented by a district that doesn't include my neighbors, but rather includes rural portions of western Hamilton County? [applause] My congressional district is no better, but at least I'm with the rest of Indian Hill in my congressional district, although when you go to the Steve Chabot site, it says, I'm not in his district, I am. But it does. But not city of Cincinnati, Madeira, Mariemont, these are all the places I consider my community, but rather I'm lumped with Harrison, Lebanon and Springboro, Ohio. These districts do not define my political community, my educational community or my business community. They don't even represent my neighborhood, not even my street. They exist for the sole purpose of guaranteeing a political party a seat. This is not representation. This is political corruption. And it needs to stop. [applause] This is my complaint, but I also want to give you my... Some solution, I think first and foremost, districts must be designed to include neighborhoods, local political communities, school districts, business districts that defines a resident community. Start with defining those communities. Second, voter party registration should not be a criteria for defining districts, should not even be allowed, should not even be thought of. Well, my cynicism doubts that those who are the product of the current corrupt system could ever bring themselves to do the right thing, hope springs eternal. Third, District lines should be a collection of contiguous geographies representing those communities. So those communities put them together to whatever the the the numbers need to be. But they should be contiguous. And that leads to districts that are rectangles, circles, triangles, but they're not the yin and yang long-tailed districts that we have now. I believe the task of this commissioner would be... Commission would be simpler if it follows some guiding principles. And I know an earlier speaker talked about that. And I don't know what your guiding principles are in terms of of how you're going to put your district or your recommendation together. My gut says politicians are incapable of such altruistic reasoning, but I hope this commission will prove me wrong and restore my faith in democracy. Thank you. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [02:00:43] Do we have Jason Spinagle? Monica Laura.

**Monica Laura** [02:01:14] [inaudble] Air for Amberleigh Village, a first generation Mexican and Native American. I was taught fairness matters. But that was back in Chicago in the bad old days. So I rise in opposition of this somewhat secretive process that is going on. The most important issue that of drawing lines, however, the way lines have been drawn in this state in the past. And in this county. Have been drawn in a bad way. Just like Jessica Rabbit said, "I'm not bad, I've just been drawn bad." [laughter] Hamilton County is not a farm county, we should not be lumped together with other farm counties far to the east of us in a boldfaced effort to split Democratic votes. There is nothing fair about the way this was done. The voters have decided... Have to decide on who they elect. Remember what's stated, no plan shall be drawn primarily to favor or disfavor a political party. Fair districts for all, at least the ones you've allowed to vote. Thank you. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [02:02:49] Thank you. Sue Mangere or Mangan?

**Sue Mangan** [02:03:07] My name is Sue Mangan and I live in Cincinnati, and I appreciate the opportunity to be here conveniently, but I'm very dismayed that it's taken this long and that you are ruining the trust of the voters by meeting in secret, probably, which you won't even acknowledge. Yes or no? That was a simple question. I'm sorry that you couldn't say yes or no. So that leads me to believe the answer is no. I mean, yes. No, I can't trust you. But yes, you have been meeting in secret. There's nothing you do as elected representatives that is more important than the process of drawing fair voting districts. Fair districts give the citizenry, us, confidence in representational democracy and make government responsible to the people. In 2015, of course, as everybody knows, guided by a bipartisan legislative coalition, we the people voted overwhelmingly for fair redistricting reform. And with that vote, 72 percent of Ohioans from both parties trusted that gerrymandering would finally be put to rest. With that vote, we demanded fair voting maps for the next decade that would support our constitutional requirement for fair representation. A true patriot would have no trouble recognizing that implementing principles of fair representation is more important than the imposed deadlines coming up. Yes, we've had a pandemic and the census data is delayed, but we also have the unprecedented advantage of sophisticated technology that could surely be used to draw maps more fairly than ever before. And if you don't know how to use that technology, then you get that sausage maker to help you. He seems like he knows a lot. It's just a matter of will and it's a matter of integrity and do you have it? That's the big question here. This is not a partisan issue when a general proportion of elected leaders reasonably responds with the party affiliations of the voters, fair representation is guaranteed. It's a stunning and frankly, shameful thing to look at the twisted maps of the past decade. It must have taken a really committed effort to skew representation up that much. It would be far easier and much more patriotic to create maps that actually represent contiguous communities with non-intersecting boundary lines, which is, by the way, what we voted for in 2015. Now is the time for you to honor the will of the people and do that. We will no longer accept district lines to favor one political party over another. Regardless of political party, lawmakers must stop the injustice of gerrymandering. No more picking your votes or your voters. It's past time for voters to be confident that we are choosing the representatives that will be responsive to all the people and not just the select few. I implore you, do your patriotic and civic duty create fair voting districts so that all Ohioans can rejoice with pride in our commitment to honest representation of government free of the stains of gerrymandering. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [02:07:12] Thank you. You know, Mark Lascovics. And on deck, Autumn Guthrie. OK. Now, they're saying it's Andrew guthrie. No, no, no. OK. Kish Richardson.

**Kish Richardson** [02:08:21] To the chair, co-chair and other members of the panel. My name is Chris Richardson and I am a recent graduate of the University of Cincinnati, currently residing in Vaughn Hill. I'm a lifelong Cincinnati native who has always tried to stay informed and involved in the community, particularly on behalf of those individuals who have neither the opportunity or privilege to be heard in our democracy. Today, I come to ensure our representatives commit to working through this year's redistricting process in a transparent, inclusive and intentional fashion. Prior to the appointment of the Ohio Redistricting Commission, a team at Ohio University had been contracted with the task of developing a comprehensive, unified redistricting database comprised of data from the past year census and relevant changes in voting precincts over time. This tool was critical in informing not only the testimony of the people you see here today, but also in informing the legislators who are ultimately responsible for drawing our maps. Unfortunately, the whole Ohio University team has yet to receive the census data due to the ongoing pandemic. The fact of the matter is that there is little to no substantive data being used to quantify the flaws that have historically existed in our maps and subsequently little to no data to inform the changes that need to be made. This will create timing challenges and issues for fair districts to be drawn and submitted, not even considering the litany of issues present in our current redistricting process. Ohio would particularly benefit from executive or judicial action to extend or clarify deadlines in order to ensure adequate time to complete the redistricting process and a robust and transparent fashion. The special legislative sessions that would take place if these deadlines aren't met will significantly increase the risk of abuses and bias as they are often short and fix in duration and reduce the opportunity for hearings and effective public oversight. Again, I only ask that you all ask ourselves how can we ensure this year's redistricting process is one that is as transparent, inclusive and intentional as possible? In closing, thank you for your time, your service and your commitment to the people of Ohio. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [02:10:24] Thank you. Yes, come on up.

**Mark Lascovics** [02:10:43] I was in the overflow room. Took took me a while to run over here. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak about this very important topic. Members of the commission I live in Montgomery, Ohio, which is a northeast suburb of Cincinnati, I'm in the Ohio 28th house district, Ohio's Senate District eight and the first U.S. congressional district. I truly want to see reforms established by the Ohio voters in 2015 and 2018 realized in the redistricting results from the 2020 census. At present, my Ohio Senate District, District eight and my U.S. constitutional district are heavily gerrymandered. This means that the elections for these seats are decided in a primary and not at all competitive during the general election. The result is that I don't feel that our representatives pay attention to all of our constituents. Our current gerrymandered districts discourage citizen participation in the democratic process. This is bad for our form of government and for our country. We need to reenergize the democratic process by creating a fair political, political districts that include communities being the building blocks for any new districts. These communities should be kept whole. The important community, economic, cultural and value added aspects are maintained in the voting district. Minority communities cannot be biased. It's critically important for minority communities to have a seat at the table. And I think if this happens, we would avoid a lot of the problems we've had recently in in our citizenry. Districts should be compact and contiguous so that a representative can be adequately meet with and support the aspirations of the constituents. At the end of the day, new districts should result in representation that approximate the registered voters within the state of Ohio. Embodying these reforms will allow this to be achieved. And I am confident that over time we will refocus our representatives on the aspirations of the constituents. Thank you very much for my testimony. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [02:13:25] Thank you. And also, Mr. Richardson, I'd like to notify you that the data is available on our website at www.redistricting.ohio.com.

**Andrew Gutherie** [02:13:43] It's not even your fault, my handwriting is horrible. My name's Andrew. I live in Miami Township of Clermont County. My state senator is Terry Johnson and my state rep is Jean Schmidt. OK. I don't really have a lead in so let's just start. "He has called together legislative bodies at places unusual, uncomfortable and distant from the depository of their public records for the sole purpose of fatiguing them into compliance with his measures." As I'm sure many of you on this panel are aware, that is a direct quote from our Declaration of Independence. I would suggest that this commission is doing something very similar to what the founding fathers were describing with how last-minute these meetings were announced. The times that these meetings were scheduled. I'm actually missing part of my senior year orientation for this, and it's also in the middle of an average work or school day. I'd like to thank the members that actually came today for performing your duty as a member of this commission. To repeat a point I heard on the Youngstown livestream and other people who have brought up today, we're doing this hearing blind without a map. And I know that the data was delayed because of the pandemic. But there are many websites online that allow you to redistrict states yourselves. And they've had the data for weeks at this point and many people have made their own maps. So it's disappointing that a map was not attempted to be made. It did not seem like the commission made an attempt to produce even just a rough draft of either the House or the Senate for us to look at today. Last time the state of Ohio had proportional representation on any level was 2008. To put that into perspective, I was five. I'm 18 in two months. The state has gone unfairly represented on the legislative level for over 75 percent of my life. Those brief two years were on the congressional level and I believe this commission is only responsible for the state senate and state house. But the record for the legislative bodies of our state is even worse. I'm not aware of a single point in my life where the state legislature could be called proportional to general statewide results. Not to dig the dead horse out of the ground and beat it any further, but gerrymandering is bad. I don't think bad even begins to describe how harmful it is. Gerrymandering causes confusion and resentment. It makes it harder for people in all districts to advocate for common or unique goals in their area because their local areas have been split up in ways that don't make sense. It causes people to begin to give up on government because they know the system is manipulated, some might even say rigged, against them. Disenfranchisement and alienation occur in many people just stop trying because they know nothing will be achieved through advocating or even in their vote in November. I hope everyone here can agree on one thing, and that is that political disenfranchisement is bad. The easy remedy, the series of problems I have listed and everyone has brought up today is to simply stop gerrymandering. I know for some of you that must be very hard to resist the urge. I think it is somewhat similar to a toddler or small child who has not yet learned self-control and keeps stealing cookies from the cookie jar before their dinner. However, in this situation, all of you are full grown adults with no authority over you to give out punishment when you are caught. All you have is a cookie jar, which you have decided to eat two thirds of, and you've left one third for everybody else. If you have a party and you eat two thirds of the cookies in front of everyone, people are going to stop coming to your parties. Thank you. And we see that with Ohio. Republicans have taken two thirds of seats in both the state Senate and the House and left only one third of the seats for Democrats. And people have stopped participating. And I would like to point out, I'm not asking for a majority of the cookies or seats here. Ohio right now is a red state as well as a rigged state. I am simply asking for proper representation of my state government. You know, if for some reason one of the third parties suddenly started performing really well in elections, I would ask that the commission attempt to draw them a seat. In a country and in a state where the legislature is a representative democracy I would ask you to please give it to districts that would allow it to function as one, because right now it isn't. And that's not good on any level. You may think you are doing some good by protecting the state from the policies of the other party. But it is not your job for you in your position to choose that for the state. That is the job of the voters who have sadly, not been... Had a seat at the table for far too long. On some more specific notes, I would like to ask the commission when drawing its hopefully fair maps that they pay attention to voting trends, that this map may stay somewhat proportional for the entire duration. I'm running out of time. For example, if the commission draws a Democratic Senate seat in Mahoning Valley, which is still possible based on the 2020 data, the seat would probably only elect a Dem for a few more cycles based on rightward shifts in the area. By counting for trends when mapping the new districts. I'm suggesting that the commission try to draw seats so that hopefully, regardless of how the trends in the state happen, the map stays fairly proportional to general statewide results. For example, a seat could be drawn in the northern outer suburbs of Cincinnati, from Hamilton and Fairfield to Mason and up to Middletown, which is shifting the opposite way of the areas in the Mahoning Valley, which could be drawn to ensure the Senate map holds its fairness into the future. The close, I would like to say that I am keeping my fingers crossed that the commission will be able to produce honest maps though I have my serious doubts that the commission will do its job. I hope that neither the legislature nor the commission or the courts perform the duties that everyone here will be in line to vote for stronger amendment to the state constitution regarding gerrymandering next time we were able to vote. Thank you for letting me speak and please do your jobs for our state. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [02:18:53] Thank you very much, Ruth Hardy. And on deck, Megan Edridge.

**Rebecca Christian** [02:19:24] But I'll be really quick. But while we're waiting for those two people, my name is Becky Christian. I work at Procter & Gamble. I think I'm on there is Rebecca. I'm here representing myself and my friends and neighbors who couldn't be here today because they're concerned about a high risk of covid. I only have three words for you, but help behalf of myself and my friends and colleagues. Gerrymandering is disenfranchisement. Thank you. [applause].

**Ruth Hardy** [02:20:06] [inaudible] And all the committee thank you for allowing me to speak to you.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [02:20:15] On deck, we have Virginia Rhoades.

**Ruth Hardy** [02:20:22] Ruth Hardy. My name is Ruth Hardy and I vote in House District 27 and Senate District seven in Anderson Township. When district lines are drawn to entrench the majority party's political power, candidates skew to the more extreme positions to avoid being primaried. By a vociferous fringe sector of the party. And it can and does happen on both sides or all sides. That's why I was among the many who carry petitions in 2015 and 2018 to amend the Constitution to create more fair districts. I take citizenship seriously and have been active in civic engagement that supports our democracy for over 30 years. And yet, because of gerrymandering, my voice is not heard and my vote doesn't matter. Because my state senator and representative both know that there's a thumb on the scale which will ensure their reelection, their only real obstacle is the possibility of being primaried. So partisan concerns usually take precedence over critical district issues. What matters most to my community is routinely dismissed in favor of the concerns of the most extreme voices in my very gerrymandered district. But when districts are drawn to provide better representation for both sides or all sides of the political and ideological aisle, legislators can broaden their view rather than just seeing through a single lens and developing blind spots just get bigger and bigger. Now, I'm going to focus briefly on one of those blind spots, a crisis pertaining directly to redistricting that's staring us right in the face. Interact for Health reports that in seven that 7 in 10 Ohioans think climate change is a serious threat. Climate change is loading the dice against us right now in ways we can see. Record heat waves, mega storms, alternating record droughts and catastrophic flooding. And we can connect the dots to things Ohioans really care about, our food, our water, our shelter, our security, and, yes, our economy. 2020 was the sixth consecutive year in which 10 or more billion dollar climate disaster events have impacted the U.S.. Think about that, 10 or more billion dollar, billion dollar climate disaster events in the past six years. Every year. Every time one of these events happens, feedback loops are set into action like dominoes in an infinite spiral. For example, the wildfires and disappearing glaciers we see in the headlines have unseen knock on effects that lead to more wildfires and more disappearing glaciers. And there are many more of these chain reactions that have already been unleashed and likely will be irreversible in four years time. The four years that we will lose if we don't get fair districts. So there's no time to lose, but we have solutions and we can start to reverse these cascading disasters now before it's too late. In competitive districts, legislators would be more likely to listen to a variety of voices and make policies that help to remedy, not exacerbate the climate problem. So if you punt and default to a four year map that basically keeps the status quo, the General Assembly will continue to block any meaningful legislation that addresses the climate crisis. Legislators from uncompetitive districts will continue to thwart every attempt citizens make to turn this around. Lacking the safeguards an Independent Citizens Commission would bring to map drawing this commission must be super diligent to eschew partisan bias and work faithfully to ensure fairness. In 2015, Senators Huffman and Sykes promoted a redistricting forum, promoted redistrictingat a voter forum in Anderson Township. Please do not forget the values you so eloquently espoused at that forum. And just as an addendum, when hundreds of thousands, maybe even millions of refugees, climate refugees are fleeing from the south of us through Ohio because they're starving due to extreme droughts and are looking for water, and Canada won't let them in, we won't be dithering around with wind set backs or removal, removing efficiency standards. Thank you for the opportunity to speak. [applause]

**Virginia Rhodes** [02:25:28] Good afternoon. My name is Virginia Rhodes. As a former social studies teacher, school administrator, school board member. And creator of many master schedules for high schools of 2000 children and things like that, I want you to know as a committee that I appreciate the complexity of the map drawing process and all the decisions that have to be made during and after the examination of all the maps that are produced. Please don't complicate it and make it more difficult by trying to defeat what you are hearing as the will of the people here. I want to thank you for being here and also thank everybody else for being here too. Fifty years ago, I jumped in an old Volkswagen, left South Carolina for college in Ohio, I got a scholarship. That's how I got out of poverty and got the rest of my family partially out of poverty. Ohio has many interests, many people. It complicates the map drawing task. We should all be cognizant of the significant diversity of humans in this state and what an asset that is in our job sectors, in our business markets, cultural organizations, universities and research institutes. That diversity is not represented by the decisions you make as legislators. [applause] My concerns are these: Number one, it should be a point of ethics for no discussion, private or public, to take place by mapmaking teams that contain the name or the party of the current representatives of that district under discussion. Better yet, there should be no legislative staff or family present In the actual map drawing, it should be an independent commission staffed and also given professional resources. After all, this process is supposed to be about the people and what we need and want, not the politicians who have a direct vested and financial interest, conflict of interest, that is, in preserving their soon to be former districts. You ought to support professionally having this done, you're, you're already in a jam, and I would also urge that those of you who are staffers or if you're a representative, that if and when if you haven't already become aware of colleagues in the in the staff and the legislature who are having secret meetings and quiet and private discussions with one another, that needs to be brought in line with the Sunshine Act and made public that you ought to expose those. This is democracy. We have a free press. Call the press. While Ohioans have many views on the government, many governmental issues and processes that affect us as voters, citizens and families, the ultimate maps should reduce the number of people whose voting jurisdiction would place them in an interest group where their needs and desires can never be met and never be heard. Thank you. So here it again. No packing. No stacking. No cracking. Or my favorite? No slicing and dicing. This third issue is dear to my heart, and I'll close with this. As a country girl from birth who eventually moved to the city, I would truly like you to consider how to manage the urban rural divide. One of the most significant political divides in the state, for good reason, with no fault of or problem with that, but neither constituency ever really feeling heard or very well served. The legislator... Legislature could do a better job serving the needs of both if we were each allowed a full consideration of our issues and needs according to what's going on in the area where we live, breathe, go to school, work, etc. By the end, if you do the right thing, we will become less divided in a more realistic and accommodating people altogether, knowing that both urban and rural residents have a full voice and neither is unheard, unserved, we can't even eat without each other. We have to have each other. Or denigrated, thus alienated from the process we call democracy. Thanks for your work in striving to make us feel and be fully represented. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [02:30:21] I will call the name again, Megan Edridge. Yes. www.redistricting.ohio.gov.

**Witness** [02:30:47] [inaudible] Excuse me, I had to come here today so I didn't [inaudible] So I would like to speak. [inaudible] And being fair is why we're all here. [inaudible] If no one else is behind me, may I speak for just one, actually two minutes?

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [02:31:36] We do have a list we would ask you to fill out a witness slip, but we will allow you to make your comments now. But when you finish, if you would complete a witness slip, we would appreciate it. [inaudbile] Thank you. Can you come forward and state your name, please?

**Ruth Hardy** [02:32:03] My name is Rukiya, sorry.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [02:32:11] [inaudible] Is on deck, so you're next.

**Ruth Hardy** [02:32:14] My name is Rukiya Zafra, Abdulmutallab Haleem. And I am a proud citizen of the United States of America. I am four generations in America born. I come from an era where no justice was done and people stood up and said no more, and my families hung in trees and were killed and burned because they said, we will take this no more. The civil rights. And though you may look at me and say she can't be that old, I am that old. And I have earned every right to be this old. And to speak. So my humble request of all of you. Is to remember they all these rights that we have even now, today, dog rights came from people who stood up and said, we will take this no more. [applause]. And unless you want to see that in the streets by the very people that I see here as my brothers and sisters who truly understand fairness, justice is for all people. Then you will find anarchy. And our history of America reflects that. The history of Italy reflects that. The history of Germany reflects that. The history of England reflects that. So you have been appointed. And you make the money off our backs. So do your job, please. Because I am very sure from history and the fact that all these people are here today in another room that can barely hear you and they haven't left. They want fairness and justice for all. And so do I. Because my family paid the price so that you could be sitting here. That is my statement. I am from College Hill. If you want to reach me, my number will be on this paper. My name and I will stand before anyone to let you know. That the people are not going to take it anymore. And if you don't want to face anarchy, please understand this. You don't have that seat because you are all of that in a bag of chips. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [02:35:20] Miss Margaret Quinn. And Stacey Riquet. Is on deck.

**Margaret Quinn** [02:35:30] Hello, my name's Margaret Quinn, I'm live in the Hyde Park neighborhood. I, too, came from a doctor's appointment. So this point may have been made already, but I guess all of you know that Steve Chabot has a huge constituency on the west, on the west side, however, I have friends who have recently moved to Maineville. My goodness, Steve Chabot is their representative. There's like a moon over the city of Cincinnati. They are they are so much farther east than I am. It isn't funny. And Brad Wenstrup is not their representative. It's it's just deplorable, and I can't imagine that any state official could look at the map as it is now and not feel embarrassed, that's all. Thank you. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [02:36:38] Miss Stacy Riquet. Record, OK, and Crystal Dandridge, she's on deck.

**Stacy Recker** [02:36:49] Good evening. Thank you, Senator Sykes. My name is Stacey Recker and I am a member of the Ohio Education Association. I am the board of director for SWOEA three, and I am a resident of Columbia-Tusculum. I'm here in Hamilton County while I am an educator at a high school in Clermont County, and clearly I am a proud graduate of this public university for both my undergrad and my master's degree in secondary education. I came from school today where I'm a social studies teacher, because this is important. This was my first day with students and anybody who knows a teacher knows there is no tired like the first week of school tired. I'm also here because I've been a political junkie since I was nine years old. I love my country. I love politics. But these last four years have been heartbreaking, and every time I vote, it's a little bit heartbreaking. Because in 2020. If districts were drawn fairly, if District 27 was drawn fairly, Sarah Bitter would be sitting here representing me, not Tom Brinkman. And here's what I know about a fair representative, I would be able to email for an appointment on a OEA lobby day to talk about public education, which has no R or D. Education is for every one, every student. And in the entire time that Tom Brinkman has represented me in District 27, he has never returned my call or my email to meet with me. And in the meantime. He drew up a bill that would require me to out my transgendered students to their parents, and that is wrong. I also know that if districts were drawn, drawn fairly, that Senator Blessing who is here today would have perhaps shown up to a meeting this summer in June to talk about fair funding. But he blew off our meeting. He never contacted us to reschedule, nor did he ever reach out and apologize because he knows he's in a safe district and that he's not going to have a legitimate challenger. He claims to be pro public education. Meet with educators when you have an appointment to talk about fair funding for our students because we matter and our summer time and our work time matter. And that's what I want, ladies and gentlemen, that's why I'm here today, to honor that nine year old, to honor the members of the Ohio Association, I'm sorry to honor the Ohio Education Association members I represent. And to honor my students who I tell to be active citizens. And I want fair districts for us all. I want representatives, whether they agree with me or not, to meet with me, to hear me. And finally, despite the fact that we in Cincinnati make fun of one another for being East Siders or West Siders, we should not be divided in House districts. We should be representative represented together as urban dwellers. And I shouldn't be, in Columbia-Tusculum, lumped into a district that is representative who has way more rural land than urban land. We might actually have public transportation in this city if districts were drawn fairly. I urge you to listen to the citizens of the state of Ohio and give us fairly drawn districts. Thank you very much. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [02:42:02] Thank you. Next up, is Crystal Dandridge?

**Crystal Dandridge** [02:42:11] Um, so I'm here representing District 8, I'm in Butler County, West Chester. Um, I just want you guys to be transparent. I trust most of you on this commission, some more than others. Due to the Householder situation, there's a big time public mistrust. And I think we need to emphasize transparency and public engagement and emphasize that like to the fullest, because right now you're dealing with citizens of Ohio who have no trust in their state legislators due to another individual's poorly done actions. So we're here and we're all crammed up in spaces and we're all trying to go throughout all 88 counties in Ohio. That shouldn't be the case, we should make it more accessible for our citizens to listen. And grieve their grievances with their legislators. We shouldn't make it more difficult. That's not how we have a public engagement policy that works. That's probably why we don't have rail and great public transportation in Ohio. That's why we keep getting beat by, I don't know, Austin, Texas, for different things. So maybe if we all come together and work together and despite what party, in this that, and a third, we do this for not only our citizens but our future citizens and leaders of the world, what we need is transparency and a way to keep people accountable, because right now we have no trust in our legislators. No offense to you guys, but due to one individual's poor actions, there is this mistrust. And some people may or may not, you know, they might use that to their advantage. We don't know. We're not saying, we don't know, but we need more of this. You see all of these people who came out, some probably took off work, some probably rushed here to get here. We need more of this. The more engaged we stay, the better Ohio we are. There's like a saying not for self, but for country, not for us, but for our citizens. So hopefully today, along with the other day. So we have for the redistricting, everyone can come together and voice their concerns. We take it seriously and not just run through and do these lines again. And it's not fair. We need a fair, transparent system and we need a way to hold people accountable if they're not doing that. Because at the end of the day, we vote you guys in, we can also vote you guys out. So I'm saying actions have consequences because all of us that have been teachers know you do this, this is your consequence. So if you do this, this is your consequence. So for you guys, it's usually you don't get reelected. So we need to come together and keep this as transparent. And fair and I emphasize to transparency to the fullest. We need more public engagement, we don't need to do anything that may or may not seem that is behind closed doors. We need to keep everything as fair as possible. OK, so that's all I had to say. Just accountability, transparency and fairness. And thank you for giving us this time to speak. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [02:46:09] Tracie Hunter. And on deck we have Wes Munzel.

**Tracie Hunter** [02:46:36] Good afternoon, thank you for the opportunity to appear here today and to speak on this issue of redistricting and why it is so important, as you already know and probably recognize me. My name is Tracie Hunter, my state senator, Cecil Thomas. I grew up in Forest Park, but after law school, I chose to move into Cincinnati to be closer to the people that I would eventually represent. I have also been the pastor of the Western Hills Brethren in Christ Church on the west side of Cincinnati for over 12 years. I am also a member of the Coalition for Justice Hamilton County. Wouldn't it be great for Ohio to lead the nation for doing something right for change? Ohio is recognized for many of the wrong reasons. Among them are racism, segregation, poverty, infant mortality, prisons for profit, not ratifying the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution until 2003. And now for being the second most gerrymandered state in the nation. Ohio's proud for being behind the times and being exclusive rather than inclusive, failing to value all of its people of every race, ethnicity and socioeconomic class. We all have the constitutional right to participate in the creation of laws, policies and state and federal funding that impact us all. It's past time for people that look like me to have a voice in the process. But we are consistently and effectively excluded by redistricting lines that favor white male Republicans. In Hamilton County, I was victimized and criminalized as the first black judge of the juvenile court and the first Democratic judge of the juvenile court. That was not supposed to happen and I was not welcome. When I dare to run for a seat that heretofore had only been held by white Republicans, mainly males, I was openly attacked, intimidated, bullied and threatened as a black woman for daring to run for a seat that white male Republicans felt entitled and privileged to keep after over 100 years. After I sued the Hamilton County Board of Elections to prove that I was the legitimate winner of the seat and eventually won my seat almost two years later against my white Republican male opponent, my Republican opponent was appointed to the seat, to the other seat by the Republican governor and put in office before me. I was denied back pay for the years that I was kept from starting my term. After I was sworn in, two years after my term began, I was terrorized daily by the Republican Party, led by the Republican Hamilton County prosecutor, who had defended and lost the election case to me in federal court. After I reported the prosecutor to the Republican dominated Ohio Supreme Court for his misconduct, he was allowed to accuse me of crimes and retaliation, handpick his friends as the special prosecutors and try me before a Republican judge and a jury comprised of the Republican family, friends and Republican legal colleagues to ensure a conviction on a charge for a crime that never occurred. When one political party is allowed to control the entire system for decades, almost a century, especially the most powerful seats of government controlling money and jobs. And those people all work, dine, party, golf and vacation together, as the complainant prosecutor did. In my case with the special prosecutors right in the middle of a public trial against me, someone like me doesn't stand a chance. And I didn't. And unless the lines are redrawn fairly, black people like me and other people of color will never stand a chance to partake of the ideologies expressed in the United States Declaration of Independence, life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. One person from one political party should not be able to control one congressional seat for over twenty five years, over a quarter of a century, as has Steve Chabot. Our political leadership is out of touch, out of control and should be out of time. It's time for people of all races, ethnicities, nationalities and political ideologies to have a fair say, an opportunity to participate in government and business in this state that we live, work and play in. And I hate to admit it, but after my experience of being strategically terrorized by the Republican Party and thrown in jail when I refused to back down from being bullied as a black judge, I vowed never to vote for another Republican in life because I learned the hard way that their views, practices, morals and ethics oppose the values and morals directly, and they directly conflict with everything I was taught to believe in and uphold as a Christian. I don't like feeling that way because there was a time in my life where I voted for anyone that I believed would represent the values I held dear and believed in, regardless of their political affiliation. My hope and belief that I could make this world a better place for all, including people like me, was shattered when I decided to participate in the political process. It will take a long time for my faith to be restored not only in the political process but in humankind. Perhaps that process for me would start if I could witness Republicans redrawing the lines not to maintain political control and power only, but to give all people a fair and equitable voice in all matters that impact us all. We're tired of taxation without representation. I want for all what I went to law school to help achieve - liberty and justice for all. Thank you. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [02:52:31] Wes Munzel. And Ben is up.

**Jihad Khan** [02:52:41] Afternoon. My name is Wes Munzel and I live in the city of Cincinnati. Thank you for holding this hearing. I did submit my comments to your email address the other day. My comments apply to both the state house and the state house, the state Senate districts and the federal congressional districts. My overall comment is that for fair districts, the proportions of representatives need to reflect the same proportions or results of the recent elections. And that's for both the state and federal district maps. For example, if the statewide vote was 50 percent Republican and 48 percent Democrat, then a number of Republican and Democratic districts should match that same proportion. This would allow for bipartisanship to take place in the middle as really good policy ideas would gain support from both sides and bipartisanship would be more easy to reach. The extremism would remain on the fringe. Currently, there are lopsided proportions at the state and federal districts, even though the statewide proportions are approximately 50 percent and 48 percent Republican to Democrat. Lopsided proportions lead to dysfunctional government and lack of true representation. Also, we want a fair competition. It's not really any fun if the game is lopsided by design every time. It's a really a very hollow victory when the same districts are held as before with lopsided margins. Currently, the Republicans have 76 percent of the state Senate districts only received approximately 55 percent of the vote. And for the U.S. House, Republicans have 12 I'm sorry, 75 percent of the districts only received 52 percent of the vote statewide. In fact, Mr. Cupp, he ran uncontested in the most recent election, and that's 100 percent of the vote. And I would suggest that's a little that's very similar to Vladimir Putin in Russia. I mean, is that what you really want? I want to reiterate something that a gentleman mentioned yesterday about his family and that there are real, real people that voted, I agree with him and and I have three kids. One is voting age and one will be 18 next year. So there's not only my family and his family, there's also 1.2 Million people voted to support the issue one in 2018. I was 75 percent of the vote. So this is a strong mandate. And it's your job to take that mandate and create some fair districts and stop the gerrymandering. The district maps are a moral issue, a constitutional issue, it's in the state constitution. It's your job to follow that. And for you personally, it's a legacy issue. What will your legacy be? Will you create fair districts or not? I hope you create fair districts and a positive legacy evolves. I have a map solution I want to hand off to Mr. Sykes. This is for the federal congressional districts. My son actually just went off to college the other day and he made this map over the last couple of weeks. But it shows that there's a way to get eight Republican districts and seven Democrat leaning districts in the state following the rules that were adopted by the law, you know, compact districts and such. There's one in Cincinnati, Hamilton County area two in Columbus and four along Cleveland, all along the Lake Erie area through Toledo. So it can be done and you need to explore that. I know I know that this meeting is not necessarily about that. But you're probably going to look at this soon if the legislature doesn't agree on something next month. Thank you. Can I drop this off to you? [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [02:56:23] We appreciate it. And also, if you could upload it as well on the website. Yeah, thank you. Thank you. Ben Blary? We have Kimberly Jacobs.

**Ben** [02:56:44] Thank you, co-chair, and. Thank you for the rest of the commission for being here to listen to my remarks. I've heard a lot this afternoon about the unfairness of the current districting lines and what I want to address just briefly is how your commission is operating. I came in here and was given five page or excuse me, five, five point agenda, the third point was overview, I'm not sure what that overview was, but I don't recall hearing anything about it. I had hoped that it would be an explanation of what your commission has been doing up to this date in order to. Developed, improved districting lines. Which gets me to my other point that's been made here a number of times this afternoon, several times this afternoon, and that is how do we know that you are going to be transparent and fair in your development of the new district lines? You said that your proposed maps would be on the website. Well, when is that going to be, how long are we going to have to respond to it? You need to be fair and transparent in what you're doing here. We're all depending upon you. And I hope that there will be time for public and input to the maps that you produce. Thank you very much. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [02:59:10] Thank you very much. Uh, we have Kimberly Jacobs.

**Kimberly Jacobs** [02:59:22] Hello, can you hear me now? Thank you, thank you for allowing me to speak today and also thank everybody who came out and stayed to this late hour. I agree with many of the sentiments were expressed today. So there's no need for me to reiterate their points. I do have one question in general. Why are there so many designees here instead of actual commission members and that they presumably agreed to the schedule? And everybody has a day job. All of us have day jobs, but we've made time to be here. It's so critical, so important for the members themselves to actually hear and see Ohioans expressing their views. It's not enough to rely on a designees interpretations or reading a transcript. And that's basically I would love to get an answer to that, because this is very, very important to all of us. I would urge them to watch the recordings and themselves and to attend all the other hearings in person. Thank you very much.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [03:00:46] The last witness that we have is Vanessa Enoch.

**Kimberly Jacobs** [03:00:57] Good afternoon, hopefully I am last but not least. Thank you. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today, like others who have spoken before me and who will come after me, maybe not in this forum, but in others. I appreciate having the opportunity to participate in this democratic experiment. For the past 12 years, me and many citizens in Hamilton County have not had the opportunity to be heard when it came time to choose our legislators. My name is Dr. Vanessa Enoch. I'm here today speaking on behalf of the Coalition for a Just Hamilton County, which represents numerous organizations and voters fighting for the rights of individual citizens in Hamilton County. The phrase taxation without representation describes a populace that is required to pay taxes to a government authority without having any say in that government's policies. This phrase couldn't be more true as it relates to poor citizens, black citizens and citizens who align themselves as independents or with the Democratic Party in the greater Cincinnati area. While sitting in the audience trying to change my speech after already hearing so much of what I was planning to say, my friend tapped me and asked the question, what good is this testimony going to do? I reflected on the past few years, on occasions when we gave public testimony on police reform, judicial reform and provided testimony in forums such as these on all sorts of injustices, over the years we have witnessed voice, our voices falling on deaf ears. Our voices were unheard despite the fact that we spoke. My friend was right, the voices of many greater Cincinnatians have been ignored because our legislators have had the ability through gerrymandering to safely hold seats and ignore the voices that were not those of the extremists that have the ability to put them in and remove them from office. Our request to you today is that the voices of these citizens who have spoken and the needs of those who have not had a voice such as black citizens, poor citizens, democratic and independent citizens who can't be here today be taken into consideration when you are drawing Ohio's new districts in the same way that districts were unfairly drawn a decade ago. We ask that you use the power of your voices and good data driven software to draw fair, partisan neutral districts that will allow voters to choose their legislators as opposed to the current system where legislators have the ability to simply ignore their constituents. Thank you so much again for allowing me to speak. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [03:04:25] Thank you, thank you, thank you. At this time, is there anyone else who would like to speak? Hearing and seeing none, we'd like to thank you all for your input. It has been very educational. We look forward to continuing these hearings tomorrow in the rest of this week. Please pay attention to the website for the announcements of additional hearings and additional information about maps, as well as criteria for how we will evaluate the maps. Thank you for your attendance. This meeting is adjourned.