

**TESTIMONY OF:
Kristine Woodworth
Cincinnati, OH**

IN SUPPORT OF FAIR DISTRICTS AND A TRANSPARENT PROCESS

My name is Kristine Woodworth. I am a resident of Columbia-Tusculum in eastern Cincinnati, four miles from downtown. In fact I can see downtown from my front window. I can and do walk from my house down to Lunken Airport, or up to Hyde Park Square. I grocery shop in 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 I see in my local grocery store or coffee shop is one of the reasons I love where I live. I consider myself very much a part of urban Cincinnati.

But my home is in a teeny tiny pointy portion of Ohio State House District 27 and Senate District 7 - the tail. My State House district includes Mt. Carmel, and Loveland, but not Hyde Park or Oakley. And my State Senate District extends almost all the way to Dayton, 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 it would take to drive to the opposite end of the district, near Dayton, Ohio. Clearly my diverse, urban community is not reflected in my state districts, and that means that we don't have the representation we deserve.

In 2011 I was honestly one of those people who didn't know much about state government. I probably could not have told you who my State Rep and Senator were. But I remember vividly my reaction to the process by which the redistricting was done that year. When I heard about the Bunker, that was when I started paying attention to what was happening in Columbus. Over the next decade it became clear that the secret map drawers had done their job well. The extreme gerrymandering of 2011 has given us a GOP supermajority in both houses of the State legislature, in which very few seats have changed party in the past decade. When lawmakers know the voters cannot throw them out, they become emboldened to craft and pass ever more extreme legislation, catering to smaller and louder minorities in an effort not to be outflanked by a primary opponent.

For the past eight years, I have been an active volunteer in the gun violence prevention movement. I can see the effects of statewide disenfranchisement in this work, which takes me to the Statehouse, or to The Ohio Channel for live streaming, quite often. 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 the criminal background check system to include gun show and online sales is 90%. Yes, nine out of ten - by definition a bipartisan majority. And every session, a bill to do this is introduced in both chambers, by members of the minority caucus. In our gerrymandered General Assembly these bills do not even receive hearings, much less a vote. I have actually had conversations with GOP lawmakers who tell me that they are in favor of this bill, but that if they co-sponsor or advocate for it they will be primaried and the "next guy will be worse than I am." This dynamic plays out in every other piece of gun legislation, with members of the supermajority fairly tripping over one another to write ever more extreme bills that the majority of Ohioans don't want, while the toll of gun violence rises unabated. But they are immune from electoral consequences, as long as they stay to the right of a primary challenger.

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 2015 Ohioans fought back against the backroom secretive drawing of partisan maps by working for and passing the reform that established this commission. We stood in the heat and the rain to gather signatures to get the measure on the ballot. And then by a margin of more than two to one, Ohio voted for 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 am not the only Ohioan who has been awakened to the dangers of partisan gerrymandering since 2011, and we are watching you.

Thank you.