

Testimony for August 24, 2021 Dayton, OH

Hi, I'm Laurel Kerr, and I live in Washington Twp, a suburb of Dayton, State House District 42 and State Senate District 6. Thank you for the opportunity to share my testimony.

It's important to me to share my testimony today because it has become clear in recent years that our lives depend upon a democracy that includes fair representation. Gerrymandering provides the illusion of democracy but actually denies it. Our representational system was hijacked in 2011 when state legislators drew gerrymandered districts with the clear goal of maintaining power. This has nothing to do with serving the citizens of Ohio.

It is well documented that gerrymandered districts result in extreme voices of a party being elected, as the election is usually won in the primary. Extreme voices do not usually reflect common sense, and do not reflect the majority views of citizens.

I would like to use gun safety as an example of how extreme voices of politicians elected because of gerrymandering have made our state less safe and a less desirable place to live. You may remember the mass shooting in the Oregon District just two years ago. There was much said about passing laws that would enhance gun safety, and the phrase DO SOMETHING resonated with many citizens regardless of political party with the hope that our legislators would enact laws to reduce fatalities. Instead, a Castle Doctrine that extends to any area where a person is legally allowed to be, rather than just their home or car, was passed, allowing someone to shoot and kill based on a perceived threat, even if later it is discovered the victim had no intention of causing harm. The duty to retreat if at all possible was removed.

My state senator stated that high school seniors should be allowed to carry their long guns to school. This is a ridiculous statement which he, to my knowledge, has not retracted. I think we can all agree that it is more likely, based on recently passed Ohio laws, that someone in our community will die because of a bullet, even after 70% of Ohioans expressed a desire for changes to gun laws to better protect our families.

Today, I am asking the commissioners to only accept state and congressional maps that fairly represent the voters of Ohio; nothing more, nothing less. The life of someone you love may depend upon it.