

Thank you commission members for the opportunity to speak today in Lima. My name is Ann Shroyer and I live in Westerville, OH – in the 68th State Legislative District – which is drawn like a block with a dangling part to fit the northern part of Westerville with in the 68th, the 19th State Senate District – which looks as 2 blocks that sprung a leak into Clintonville though most of the district is rural central Ohio. I live in the 12th Congressional which is a classic gerrymandered shape running from Mansfield to Clintonville – y'all really love to mix & match Clintonville with some strange bedfellows – and over to Zanesville. Westerville has a population of approximately 41,000 people and yet, we have 2 different state senators and 2 different state legislators even though we are a city of 12.7 square miles.

The importance of fairly drawn districts cannot be overstated. When district lines are drawn to give extreme advantage to one party or another, then the true constituents of that legislator are the large donors and lobbyists who donate/bribe with enough money to bend the ear and get the attention of elected officials. It should be the residents of a district who have the attention of their elected officials, not groups looking to profit from our tax dollars and state laws.

Obviously lines need to be drawn and someone will be in a different district from a neighbor, but sometimes this slicing and dicing of communities borders on kirigami. I currently live in Westerville, but we had no redistricting commission hearings nearby, so I will focus on the area near Lima. My hometown is Wapakoneta. Wapak's city limits are in the 82nd which might seem contiguous, but all around it are in the 84th. The pool I swam in for high school is in the 84th – just east of the city limit while the pool where current Wapak high schoolers swim is in the 82nd. St. Joseph's Catholic Church is in the 82nd, but St Joseph's Church cemetery, a mere 5 minute drive away, is in the 84th. You can attend church in one district and after death be represented by a different state rep. St Marys is in the 82nd and yet, Grand Lake St Marys is in the 84th. The gerrymandering of this area does not even make much political sense – this broader region is predominantly farmland and Republican and unvaccinated. Was this area sliced and diced just for sport? As practice for the main event cities in Ohio? Curiously, Allen county is not cut once – it is the whole of the 4th legislative district and is wholly within the 12 state senate district.

The State Senate lines for Wapakoneta are also seemingly just drawn for sport or with a blindfold. Both of the lakes where I water skied as a kid and where my dad fishes are in the 12th District – Grand Lake St Marys to the west and Indian Lake to the east, while Wapakoneta – smack dab in the middle - is in the first. Growing up, we went to Lima for shopping – I remember the thrill of riding the escalator at Lazarus as a kiddo and rushing to get a booth at the Kewpie for lunch. Lima is in Senate District 12 – north of Wapakoneta which is in the 1st. Why are areas north of Wapak in a district that also stretches south to Urbana – especially when Wapak's District 1 runs north to the Michigan line? I know Wapak split north and south based on different sports leagues, but these legislative lines have seemingly carved St Marys and Wapakoneta out as a dangling ornament to hang from the bulk of the 1st Senate District.

And everyone knows the glory that is Ohio's 4th Congressional District that stretches across the state like a duck shaped blight on democracy. How in the heavens is it that my in-laws in Avon Lake are LESS THAN a mile from being in the same Congressional District as my parents in Wapakoneta. They live 157 miles apart, nearly a 3 hour drive through the middle of the state. There is no rationale for this other than pure greed and the desire to focus on wealthy donors and lobbyists and getting their bidding done in the Congress, not helping actual Ohioans in these ridiculous districts. In 2018 the Congressman for

the 4th voted no on the Farm Bill in its first round. OH-4 is predominantly farmland – who was he fighting for? Certainly not the residents of the 4th.

These unfairly drawn lines leave voters with no real representation. For example – 90% of Ohioans – including 87% of gun owners in Ohio approve of universal background checks, and yet this gerrymandered state legislature has made NO MOVEMENT on passing it – because the majority have major donors in the gun lobby. Columbus OH has over 135 homicides this year, most of them by firearm and many know where to buy guns with no background check at the perpetual gun show on the east side, but the gerrymandered legislature continues to do nothing to pass background checks. The legislature is working hard to arm our school teachers with 8 hours of training because of a frenzied gun lobby to get guns in the hands of everyone, even though school shooting deaths in this country over 10 years were 357 deaths and in just a year and a half of pandemic 400 US children have died from COVID but the Ohio legislature is holding hearings on a bill sponsored by my state senator to ban mask mandates in the state. One can only assume that loud and wealthy donors drive the hearing schedules, because it certainly is not common sense. The legislature did pass a Stand Your Ground/ Kill at Will bill last Christmas – at the height of COVID deaths in the state, the priority was to protect shooters. The only proponent testimony given at the hearing was from a gun lobbying group. The gun lobbying groups pay a lot of money directly and through independent expenditures to our lawmakers and get their bills passed, while mothers mourn their dead children or are shot in the torso and leg while holding their child and running from gunshots in a neighborhood. Mothers are shot and killed with their infant children by domestic abusers and Aisha's Law never made it out of committee in the Senate - and a mother mourns her daughter who died by gun suicide less than an hour after purchasing the gun despite attempts by family to keep her safe because an Extreme Risk Protection Order cannot get passed in this gerrymandered state. Maybe if more mothers had a huge budget for donating to campaigns, we could save lives with common sense legislation that the majority of Ohioans want. Until then, we continue to mourn our dead and injured while the legislature does NOTHING. Mothers will continue to show up and we DEMAND that we have fair districts to elect lawmakers motivated by their voters who are hurting and not gun lobby groups. We DEMAND fair districts so legislators who are responsive to voters can pass legislation that saves lives including the average 929 Ohioans who die by suicide by gun EVERY YEAR. We DEMAND that there is a transparent and fair process for drawing new district lines. Gerrymandering is killing Ohioans.