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My neighborhood is diverse in terms of income, educational level, and age. Among my immediate neighbors are teachers, writers, auto mechanics, health care workers, retirees, and college professors. One thing that I think my neighbors share in spite of our diversity, though, is a growing sense of frustration with the lack of responsiveness among our elected officials and the sense that voters in other parts of our district have concerns that are quite distinct from ours. As our needs should be listened to, so should theirs be. Fairly drawn maps—maps that allow voters to choose their representatives and not the representatives to select their voters—would not permit this feeling that our elections do not allow us to express our will.

The result of this voter dissatisfaction is that many people in my district have turned off the political system altogether: our representatives cannot/do not represent us and we can do very little to change the embedded structure of how we are represented. In the eight years I've lived in this district (all together I've spent 27 years living in Ohio), I have seen a growing cynicism and apathy among my neighbors, many of whom are completely tuning out all political discussion, and have stepped back from participation and engagement in voting. This lack of participation is very dangerous for our system of representative democracy as our government relies on people paying attention and, then, on having their voices heard when they write, call, or show up at the offices of their elected officials. How can people in Grove City or Dublin have the same concerns as those who live on the outer edges of Clintonville?

Among the issues at the top of our concerns is the destructive potential of climate change. In my neighborhood, many of us suffered not one but two extremely damaging floods to our property in 2020. With the evidence of wild fires, droughts, floods and damaging hurricanes everywhere around us, why do we not have representatives who will respond to the urgency of our concerns about the environment? Other concerns that I hear voiced: the rising costs of health care and prescription drugs, gun violence, and the evidence of corruption at the State House. These issues eat away at the fabric of a well-functioning society; yet, nothing gets done. Why?

The people of Ohio have voted (twice!), by overwhelming majorities, for fair and representative districts. We must have transparent mapmaking and a sincere effort to reverse gerrymandering or my friends and neighbors will grow even more cynical and apathetic than they have already become. This sense of frustration and voter cynicism is incredibly dangerous for the health of our democracy. Please see to it that the expressed wishes of Ohio voters—for transparent and clear mapmaking, an end to gerrymandering, and a sense of full participation in the political process—are honored and that we can feel like we all share in our representative government.

Thank you.