

August 27, 2021

Testimony to be delivered at the Mansfield hearing

Co-Chairs Cupp and Sykes, members and representatives of the Redistricting Commission:

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Laura Robertson-Boyd. I am a resident of Columbus living in House District 26 and Senate District 15.

I am here today to speak both as a representative of an organization and as an individual Ohio voter. I'll share examples of how extreme gerrymandering has harmed Ohio voters by giving an outsized voice to minority opinions and created a Legislature that does not need to be responsive to its constituents.

I am the volunteer Local Group Lead for the Columbus Chapter of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America. We are a non-partisan, grassroots movement of American mothers and others fighting for public safety measures that respect the Second Amendment while protecting us from gun violence.

Since our organization's inception in 2012, we have been showing up to the Statehouse to advocate for common sense gun safety measures, such as background checks on all gun sales – which 90% of Ohioans, including 87% of gun owners, support (1). But in the current supermajority-controlled Legislature, such commonsense measures cannot even get a committee hearing. After the tragic Dayton mass shooting on August 4, 2019, when Ohioans pleaded with Governor DeWine to DO SOMETHING, he proposed increased safety measures in the Strong Ohio bill, but the supermajority-controlled Legislature would not hold hearings on that bill and instead passed Stand Your Ground – a measure that has been proven to increase gun homicides (2) which was opposed by law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, and a whole host of Ohioans. Due to gerrymandered districts, legislators don't need to represent the voices or concerns of their constituents. Instead, they do the bidding of lobbyists like the Buckeye Firearms Association and the NRA. This is not representative government. Fairer districts will give us more voice in the issues that matter most to Ohioans, not lobbyists.

I am also here as the parent of two young adults, registered voters who currently attend college at Ohio public universities. Both of my kids identify as transgender, so I want to represent the concerns of transgender and LGBTQ Ohioans.

Earlier this year, Governor DeWine proposed a \$50 million marketing campaign to advertise Ohio as a “welcoming” and “progressive state” (3) to attract and keep younger workers.

But Ohio is anything but progressive since gerrymandered districts have allowed extremist views to dictate our policies, and Ohio is certainly unwelcoming to the LGBTQ community. For the last ten years, the Ohio Fairness Act, which would prohibit discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation, has been introduced in the Legislature again and again. This measure is supported by Ohio businesses so they can attract a diverse workforce, yet the bill has never moved since the district lines were last drawn to give an outsized voice to conservative views.

What's worse are the current legislative attacks on transgender Ohioans. Bills targeting trans athletes and outlawing medical care for trans youth are part of a nationwide trend among conservative legislators trying to score political points by "othering" people like my children. These dangerous and discriminatory bills, if passed into law, will make Ohio an unsafe place for transgender Ohioans, and young adults like my kids will not stay here. They will take their skills and tax dollars to more welcoming and inclusive states where they don't have to worry about legislators denying them basic human rights.

These are just a few examples of why it is so important that Ohio's district lines be drawn more fairly to represent the voices and concerns of all Ohioans, not just minority opinions. So that Ohio can truly be a progressive and welcoming state, I urge you to fulfill the promise of the redistricting reforms placed into the Ohio Constitution and draw new district maps that serve the voters - not the political interests of parties or lobbyists.

Thank you.

Laura Robertson-Boyd  
Local Group Lead, Columbus chapter  
Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America

Footnotes:

1. Quinnipiac University Poll. (July 26, 2019). *Ohio Voters Oppose Fetal Heartbeat Abortion Ban, Quinnipiac University Poll Finds; 90 Percent Support Universal Gun Background Checks*. Retrieved from: <https://poll.qu.edu/Poll-Release-Legacy?releaseid=3634>
2. Smart, Rosanna, Andrew R. Morral, Sierra Smucker, Samantha Cherney, Terry L. Schell, Samuel Peterson, Sangeeta C. Ahluwalia, Matthew Cefalu, Lea Xenakis, Rajeev Ramchand, and Carole Roan Gresenz, *The Science of Gun Policy: A Critical Synthesis of Research Evidence on the Effects of Gun Policies in the United States, Second Edition*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2020. [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR2088-1.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2088-1.html).
3. Balmert, J. (February 21, 2021). *A 'progressive' state: Gov. Mike DeWine wants \$50M to encourage people to move to Ohio*. Cincinnati Enquirer. Retrieved from: <https://www.cincinnati.com/story/news/politics/2021/02/01/ohio-gov-mike-dewine-wants-50-million-market-progressive-state/4342873001/>