**Ohio Redistricting Commission - 8-27-2021- Mansfield**

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**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [00:00:00] The hearing will come to order now. And before we begin our official business, we would like to thank the Ohio State University Mansfield Campus for hosting us today and give Dean Norman Jones an opportunity to address all of us.

**Dean Norman Jones** [00:00:19] Thanks so much, we just want to say very briefly that we're honored to have our panelists here and our guests. We're happy to support the electoral process and excited about the work that you're doing. So thanks for coming. I also want to introduce Dr. Dorey Diab, president of North Central State College, who's just going to say a word for a moment. We are both jointly co-located on this campus and work closely together.

**Dr. Dorey Diab** [00:00:44] Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you for being here. Welcome to our campus and thank you for exercising your citizen's right and to participate in our government processes. Welcome again!

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [00:00:57] Well, thanks to both of you for being. [applause] Thanks to both of you for being here and for working together on a closed co-located campus. I think that's a real plus wherever it occurs, and thank you for providing the educational opportunities for both young people and older people on at this location. So appreciate your work. Thank you. As people arrive who would like to testify, we ask that if you haven't done that already, to, please fill out our witness slip that's on the table outside the the hearing room and provide them to our staff so that we know who would like to present that testimony. At this time. We will take attendance and ask the staff to call the roll.

**staff** [00:01:54] Thank you, co-chair Vernon Sykes.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:01:57] Present.

**staff** [00:01:58] Co-chair Robert Cupp.

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [00:01:59] Here.

**staff** [00:01:59] Gov. Mike DeWine's designee Matt Donahue.

**Matt Donahue** [00:02:03] Present.

**staff** [00:02:03] Auditor Keith Faber.

**Auditor of State Keith Faber** [00:02:05] Present.

**staff** [00:02:05] Jeanne Chadley, designee for Frank La Rose.

**Jeanne Chadley** [00:02:10] Present.

**staff** [00:02:10] Representative Beth Liston, designee for leader Sykes.

**Rep. Beth Liston** [00:02:14] Here.

**staff** [00:02:16] And Senator Jay Hottinger, designee for President Huffman.

**Sen. Jay Hottinger** [00:02:20] Present.

**staff** [00:02:20] Roll Call is complete.

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [00:02:21] Thank you. I would like to introduce several legislators who are not on the commission but are here in person and we appreciate their attendance. And I'll just ask you to stand when I call your name so everybody can see who you are. Representative Jarrells in the back. Representative Lightbody. Representative Russo. And, Senator Yuko. The Senate minority leader, thank you all for coming. A bit of an overview before we begin testimony. In November of 2015, Ohio voters approved a constitutional amendment which implemented a new General Assembly redistricting process and established the Ohio Redistricting Commission. The commission consists of the governor, the auditor of state, the secretary of state and one commissioner appointed by each of the legislative leaders of the two largest political parties of the Ohio House and the Senate total four, one from each caucus. The commission has until September 1, 2021, to pass a plan with the votes of at least two members affiliated with each major political party. If that fails, the commission has until September 15th, 2021, to pass a plan by majority vote that is just by four members. Maps that are passed with the votes of two members affiliated with each major political party are valid for 10 years, a decade, and maps passed by majority vote are valid for two general elections or four years. Ohio's legislative reapportionment process, as in all states, occurs in years ending and one such as 2021, which are also the years in which the federal census figures are released by the U.S. Department of Commerce. The census figures released this year indicate that Ohio has a population of 11,799,448, a 2.3 percent growth from 2010 under Article 11 of the Ohio Constitution. Each of the 99 house districts should contain 119,186 persons, and each of the 33 Senate districts should contain 347,559, with a five percent deviation allowed up or down. Anyone who has researched or undertaking the drawing of legislative districts knows this process involves far more than simply putting roughly the same number of people in each district. Article 11 of the Ohio Constitution contains specific rules governing the construction of districts, including several layers of sometimes complex requirements, including district population requirements and permissible population deviations, which I just mentioned, rules in how to prioritize splits or political subdivisions such as counties, municipalities and townships where necessary. Additional district standards regarding favoring or disfavoring political parties and also compactness of districts. The board must, the commission must comply with the Ohio Constitution in addition to all applicable federal laws, including the Voting Rights Act, because these hearings are held for the purpose of receiving your input in the process. Prior to maps actually being available, we are not going to go over the details of all of the law. However, we encourage you to visit the commission website at www.redistricting.ohio.gov, which provides additional information on the redistricting process under Article 11. The purpose of today's hearing is to gather information, comments and input regarding the upcoming reconfiguration of the House and Senate district lines. Under a new congressional redistricting process adopted by the voters in 2018, the Ohio Legislature has the first, the Ohio Legislature has the first opportunity to draw congressional lines through the enactment of a bill that would be signed by the governor. If it cannot do so the process falls to the Ohio Redistricting Commission. Therefore, we ask that all witnesses today limit comments and testimony to the most immediate task of the Ohio Redistricting Commission, which is the adoption of Ohio House and Ohio Senate district lines. We're here to listen today. We're not here to debate you or one another. We're here to get input from Ohioans on the state legislative redistricting process and how it impacts your communities and your representation in the Ohio General Assembly. Today, we have a limited amount of time for the hearing and want to give everyone an opportunity to provide input. We're scheduled here for three hours and we ask witnesses to limit your testimony in the interest of time and out of courtesy to other persons who want to testify, who wish to address the panel. And we're asking that be limited to around four minutes. A few other items before we begin. These proceedings will be recorded by the Ohio channel, so the commission, in its deliberation, may consider things said here today, as well as the other six, no, nine hearings that have been held. So please speak clearly and loudly enough for the panel and the audience members to hear. Additionally, we'd ask you, of course, to be respectful of other witnesses and attendees. If you have written testimony. Please submit a copy to our staff so that it can be included in the official official record of the proceedings. Members of the public who cannot attend in person may also submit testimony on the commission website. I would also like to acknowledge that the House Minority Leader, Emilia Sykes, has arrived and would like to give you recognition. So we will now begin with our first witness here today, and that person is who gets to be first Tommy rhat from Ghana.

**Dr. Tommie Radd** [00:09:26] Hello. I think this always needs to come down a bit for me.

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [00:09:31] Hello.

**Dr. Tommie Radd** [00:09:32] Hello, my name is Dr. Tommie Radd. I vote in Ohio Senate District three, House District 19 and Congressional District three. The reason I'm here is to highlight the detrimental impact that partisan gerrymandering of our Ohio House, Senate and congressional districts have on my community and state. Over years, I've worked with many nonpartisan groups, including Common Cause, League of Women Voters, Ohio Voice, All on the Line and Fair Districts. Our goal is to reset Ohio and the Congress to preserve and protect our constitutional Democratic Republic. My community, Gahanna is a diverse community of approximately 36,000 people, evenly split along party lines with a large number of independent voters. Gahanna Jefferson Public Schools includes portions of Jefferson Township, Mifflin Township, a number of Columbus precincts and all of Gahanna City. Our school district is split with three Ohio House districts 19, 20 and 25, and two Ohio Senate districts 3 and 15. Gahanna City is split between two congressional districts, 3 and 12. This has to stop. Our city and schools deserve one unified voice for representation at all levels of government. Gahanna citizens have submitted a map for this unification to this commission. This loud demand for fair districts is exemplified in the Gahanna vote. Ohio Fair House and Senate districts issue one in 2015 passed with 79 percent of the vote. Ohio Congressional Fair Districts Issue one in 2018 passed with 81 percent of the vote. Four of every five Gahanna voters overwhelmingly said enough is enough. This is a democracy issue and one of fairness and representation. When stories like my community's are replicated statewide, the impact is a supermajority at the State House and the Ohio representation sent to Washington, DC. You now have the power to fix this threat. Ohioans voted for you to fix this unfairness and stand for all people now. This redistricting commission has a responsibility to draw fair mas per the letter and the spirit of our Ohio constitutional amendments, as demanded by the voters. we expect public hearings to review the maps prior to approval. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

[00:12:39] Thank you. Any member of that panel have any questions? All right. And our next witness is the Reverend Joel King Jr., also from Gahanna.

**Rev. Joel L King, Jr.** [00:13:13] Good afternoon, commissioners, and to this audience this afternoon, and Ohio State University and North Central Campus share this campus together for a long time since I've been on this campus, my dad used to pastor here before he passed in the Mount Hermon Baptist Church in Mansfield, Ohio. I'm Reverend Joel King Jr. from the Gahanna, Ohio now part of both Mansfield and Columbus, and I vote in now in the House District 19, Senate District three and Congressional District three. The reason I'm here is to demand fair voting districts for my community and the state. I serve as a leader in the Columbus NAACP, the Baptist Pastors Conference of Columbus, the Baptist Minister Allies of Columbus. I'm a life long advocate for all citizens for the basic right to vote in Ohio and around this country. The unfairness of our current Ohio House, Senate and congressional districts is one of the barriers to the vote because it discriminates against minorities and vulnerable citizens of our city, of our state. Our history of unfairness and lack of assessment to vote is far from a new story that's being told right now in our country. There has been a blatant unfairness for all generations, past and present. We need to stop this partisan gerrymandering of districts now in this day and age. This is a critical first step to guarantee the basic right to vote for all Ohioans in Ohio, and I urge you as a committee to make the difference in your efforts as you lead this day in these hearings around our state and make the difference in our community that our people can be fair and be justified and have one district voting in one city, not several districts in one city. And make this, and I hope that you will make the grand stand to make a difference and make good trouble in Ohio. Thank you. [applause]

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [00:15:25] Thank you. Thank you, Reverend, are there any questions from the panel? Thank you. Our next witness is Melissa Saul, also from Gahanna.

**Melissa Sull** [00:15:48] Hello, my name is Melissa Sull from Gahanna Ohio. I vote in Ohio House District 19, Ohio Senate District three and Congressional District 12. I applaud the commission for allowing public comment in this process. It is limited and late, but a significant improvement over the secretive partisan gerrymandering process of 2011. I'm looking forward to the hearings following the introduction of the proposed maps, public deliberation and the opportunity for the public to weigh in on the new district lines are key to the reforms passed in 2015 and 18. My local Gihanna Jefferson School district sits in three Ohio House districts as a result of the 2011 process. This fractures the voice of my community. I believe that policies impacting our schools, voter choice, women's rights and the state budget are all negatively impacted by the politically motivated decisions of 2011. Cracking and packing Ohio communities has created inequality and serves only those who crave political power. The warped shape of Ohio districts favors incumbents and money over the will and well-being of Ohioans. It leaves us with extremists when we need dialog and showmen when we need statesmen. I have contributed to one of the many maps submitted to this commission for consideration. Our map, like many of the other submissions, is designed to keep communities together. Please respect the will of the people who have voted repeatedly and in great majorities to end this harmful and mean spirited practice. Thank you [applause]

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [00:17:50] Rather than me continuing to ask members of the panel if you have questions, if you do have a question, sort of signal me so we can do that. Otherwise we'll just move on to the next witness and and that would be Karen Prelipp from Norwalk, Ohio.

**Karen Prelipp** [00:18:27] Thank you for allowing me to speak to you. My name is Karen Prelipp. I vote in Ohio House District 57, Ohio Senate District 13 and Congressional District seven in Norwalk. I want to draw your attention to the issue of gerrymandered districts, resulting in legislators' lack of concern for the minority party's issues and viewpoints. When I call my representatives offices, my remarks are met with a lack of interest at best and attempts to discredit me at worst. I was even told Mr. Stein was not voting on a particular bill when I knew for a fact that the bill was on that morning's calendar for voting. His aide said Mr. Stein has not even read the bill, so it can't be up for a vote. I expressed a great deal of concern and frustration that my legislator was going to vote on something he was not even briefed about. Attempts to contact my other representatives are met with silence or a form letter stating their view with no mention of my comments or request for information. This effectively means I do not have anyone who represents me. This is the consequence of Ohio's extremely gerrymandered maps. A true democracy, a representative government means the minority have a voice. Currently, we do not. I ask the commission to draw maps that do not provide predictable results. More than 70 percent of Ohioans have voted for fair districts. You were charged with this with providing these maps. Will you meet your congressional mandate? Thank you for your time and consideration of my request. [applause]

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [00:20:32] Thank you for being here. Our next witness is Andrea Yagoda from Delaware, Ohio. Welcome, Andrea.

**Andrea Yagoda** [00:20:54] Co-chairs, members of the commission, thanks for offering me the opportunity to speak today on redistricting. My name is Andrea Yagoda. I've been a resident of Ohio for 47 years. The last forty three of those years have been in the same location in Senate District 19, House District 67. My current representatives have been in office 11 and 13 years respectively, having switched houses after reaching their term limits. Gerrymandering has had a dramatic impact on my life. When I first moved to my home, activism was definitely not on my to do list. But over time, I became active in community efforts to limit development and to prevent the construction of an upground reservoir. I even ran for public office. When I retired, my focus shifted to legislation. I started writing my representatives, calling their offices, emailing them, but got no response. Not once, not ever. I did, however, get blocked from my senator's tweet, a Twitter feed, no acknowledgment other than an automated email and a voicemail, which basically tells me that I should not expect a response. How can that be? I pay my taxes. These officials work for me. Gerrymandering. When your election is guaranteed, you had the luxury of ignoring your constituents. So I stopped calling. I stopped emailing. I stopped writing. What was the point? I became apathetic. I withdrew from my community. Because of gerrymandering, my vote was diluted and did not account for anything. Voting became an exercise in futility for me. Yes, at times we had candidates who ran against these representatives, but they were merely names on the ballot. I put a footnote in my written testimony because that's changed in the last couple of cycles. I fully understand running a campaign takes a lot of time and money and a lot of personal sacrifice. But who wants to make that commitment? When the results of the election are predetermined. As time progressed, I became angry. I was tired of taxation without representation, so I chose to vote against every levy on the ballot, whether it was schools, seniors, sheriff, fire, highways. I chose in anger to vote against my community and in effect myself, but I did not care. I encourage others to do likewise, rationalizing, for example, that if the schools were in dire financial straits financially, the General Assembly would have to address school funding. Then that anger turned to fear. I resumed my act as, activism on a larger scale. None of the activities I was involved in, although better for my community, gave me any voice in governance, so I decided to take my voice directly to the statehouse. I had envisioned that committee hearings would be an opportunity for robust exchanges of opinions and ideas. What I found was a group, not all, of politicians who made us feel unwanted, who were rude, disrespectful at times confrontational and downright mean spirited. They made it clear they did not want to hear us. Another exercise in futility. How can we be treated this way? How can the bill pass when hundreds of opposing testimonies are submitted versus one proponent? Gerrymander. Gerrymandering. Listening to sponsors of certain bills? I'm convinced they have not read them. I've given you examples in my footnote in my in my written. How can we be governed by outside groups who draft legislation, not even being read or understood by its sponsors? Gerrymandering. We need people policies, not primary prevention policies, which is what gerrymandering has given us. For the three Ohio, for the Ohioans who testified previously at other hearings that say we should be more Republican in our districts. Let me just share some facts. I'm sorry I'm going to go over. In 2018. Only fifty five point seven two of those registered actually voted in this state. Not all voters, however, cast votes in the statewide election. There was a drop off from, a drop off of one hundred and ninety seven thousand votes in the governor's race to three hundred and thirty seven thousand eight hundred and sixty one in the auditors race. DeWine got fifty point thirty nine percent of the vote. Cordray got 46. I mean, I'm sorry. Yost got fifty two point sixteen. Sprague got fifty three point twenty six. Faber got forty nine point sixty six. LaRose got fifty point sixty five percent of the vote. Believe it or not, the state race that garnered the most votes was the rates for the Attorney General's Office. And Dave Yost beat his opponent by a margin of one hundred and eighty seven. Eight hundred and forty seven votes. Of the votes cast on issue one, those who voted to end gerrymandering exceeded the nays by seven hundred eighty three thousand three hundred and seventy eight votes. [applause] I'm tired, I am tired of packing and cracking. I'm tired of closed door deals. I'm tired of having no vote, no voice, no influence, and I'm tired of having my vote diluted and I'm tired of the lack of accountability by those who are supposed to represent us. All of us, their constituents, not just the radical bases. Please do not mistake being tired with apathy. I, and so many others have worked so hard to even consider giving up now. I want every member of this commission and the General Assembly to remember that Ohioans of all political persuasions voted to end gerrymandering. We voted for fair districts, compact, contiguous counties, transparency, citizen input and representation. Representational fairness. Democracy demands it. We demand it. Every vote should count and be treated equally. This is how a functioning democracy works for all of us and and all of us as Americans would want that. Thank you. And I would gladly take any questions. [applause]

**staff** [00:28:05] Senator Craig was walked in if he wanted to introduce him.

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [00:28:16] Before we proceed with the next witness, I'd like to introduce and recognize being here Senator Craig, please. [applause] Represent the Columbus area, almost all of Columbus, right? All right. Next witness is Mindy Hedges from Radnor, Ohio.

**Mindy Hedges** [00:28:59] Co-Chairs Senator Sykes and House Speaker Cupp, members of the newly formed redistricting commission. Thank you for allowing me to speak. My name is Mindy Hedges. I know you heard me yesterday in Lima. I have a little more to say. I live in a rural area of Ohio in one of the fastest growing, richest counties in our state. Most people would be thrilled to live here, but it creates many problems for those of us who still cherish rural living. The growth is coming at us fast and furious. The zoning issues in our county have gone crazy and are overwhelming our farming communities. As a result, we have no one watching out for our farms or our natural preserves or our environment or our beautiful farm communities. Our representatives are not fighting for us as it appears. What they care about is the riches and the growth. But Ohio is failing in that. Also, our population is shrinking because many of our young don't see Ohio for its job opportunities or as a state that has laws that are democratic or that take all Ohioans into account. Because of the way we are gerrymandered, our laws only serve... So sorry. I've lost a page.

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [00:30:29] That's OK. Take your time that's happened to all of us

**Mindy Hedges** [00:30:31] only served one party, only served to enrich that party and only serve to enlighten their businesses and their passions, not those that have made Ohio the beautiful state that we are. When a state is gerrymandered as badly as Ohio, there is a vastly uneven voting history which leans one way towards one party, regardless of how that state is aligned politically. Presently, Ohio should align similarly to the results of the last gubernatorial election, fifty point four percent Republican to forty six point seven percent Democrat. Or has Andrea had told you, all the rest of it is almost 50 50. This is how the state should be this district. Currently, Ohio is split 75 to 25 percent. Republican to Democratic representation, which is nowhere near the public's voting record or to their desired outcomes for legislative action. In addition, the public drastically notices that our representatives know, they no longer have to campaign or even ask their constituents how we feel about issues like vaccines, voting rights or redistricting as their positions are actually secured not by the voters, but by their gerrymandered seats. This is how our country was designed. This is not how our country was designed nor formulated. partisan gerrymandering is inconsistent with the democratic ideals enshrined in the Constitution since the founding generation vehemently denounced it. In the extreme form it takes today, with districts drawn to give the controlling party a stranglehold on power. Gerrymandering represents an unprecedented threat to our democracy. Patrick Henry, for example, crafted a district to separate James Madison from his political supporters, but newspapers decried Henry's scheme as a violation of the right of free people to choose their representatives. In the action that gave gerrymandering its name, Massachusetts Gov. Elbridge Gerry in 1812 signed a districting bill designed to give his party a decisive political advantage. Opponents objected to that law, inflicted a grievous wound on the Constitution. It subverts and changes our form of government and silences and stifles the voice of a majority. The machinations of Henry and Gerry, adamant opponents to the Constitution, hardly exemplify that spirit. The next two centuries saw continued objections to partisan gerrymandering as a violation of our core constitutional principles. For example, in 1870, Representative and future president James Garfield criticized the practice and objected that no man, whatever his politics, can justly defend it. In 1891, President Benjamin Harrison condemned gerrymandering as a form of political robbery. He declared that its overthrow of majority control by the suppression or perversion of the popular suffrage represented our chief national danger. Our framers were keenly aware of the corruption of the English system of parliamentary elections in which they referred to them as rotten boroughs. Americans in the revolutionary age scorned the British, in which defenders claim parliament would act wisely, even if it was not directly representative. Instead, our founders embraced actual representation as a Central American system. Elected representatives would have close ties to the constituencies, and they would be responsive to the popular democratic will. Their commitment to actual representation was to be unimpeded by contrived barriers between the electorate and its representatives. This was fundamental and widely shared when colonists shouted no taxation without representation, they were stating a view of the legitimate governance very much relevant to anti gerrymandering. And nobody thought representation meant a government imposed permanent minority status of a gerrymandered system. Madison understood the abuses that would come from state legislatures trying to entrench their own faction. Madison said whenever state legislators had a favorite measure to carry, they would take care. So to mold their regulations as to favor the candidates they wish to succeed. He warned at the constitutional convention. Inequality and legislatures would lead to inequality and congressional representation. He continued, it was impossible to foresee all the abuses that might be made of the discretionary power. partisan gerrymandering violates the framers core principle of actual representation. It likewise conflicts with the First Amendment right to meaningful political speech and association. And with the 14th Amendment extension of constitutional responsibilities to the states. Viewed through history, partisan gerrymandering is not an accepted feature of our American system, and the extreme gerrymanders we see today go dramatically further than anything we have seen in the past. They sabotage fundamental constitutional values for those defending partisan gerrymanders, contrary to their sweeping claims. History is not on their side, and it should not be on the side of any of our elected officials. Ohioans are leaving our state in droves, in part because of the partisan way ohio is gerrymandered. Let's fix this together, please. I ask you to consider my testimony. Thank you. [applause]

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [00:36:24] Thank you for your testimony. Our next witness is Craig Schwartz, thank you. Have you come up and state your name for the record, so we have it correctly. And you are from Upper Sandusky?

**Craig Schwartz** [00:36:41] Yeah, I have chicken scratch. Dear members of the commission, thank you for allowing me to testify today here in Mansfield. My name is Craig Swartz and I am a resident of Upper Sandusky. Currently chairman of the Wyandot County Democratic Party. However, the views expressed here are my own and not behalf of the wind out Democratic Party, nor that of the Ohio Democratic Party. This is my statement. What happened to my Ohio? When did the common threads that bound us together split apart? Where are its leaders? Why can't Ohioans demand more? How do we unite in truth going forward? These are deliberately subjective questions which would require hours, if not days, to answer in an objective and responsible manner is possible, but which are very much on the minds of all Ohioans in one form or another these days due to the long list of catastrophic events occurring in just the past decade plus, including the crash of 08 right up to the pinnacle of corporate and government colluding corruption called HB6 and of course, the pandemic. It has now been exposed to all the disc, total disconnect occurring between our elected representatives and large parts of state and the electorate, with HB6 as leading example of laws that are passed without any effective and honest communication between elected officials and their constituents. The redistricting that occurred after the 2010 Census simply allowed lawmakers to pay little heed to constituents, particularly those codified into into the minority. This is what gerrymandering has wrought. The Ohio I remember coming back to, prior to the new millennium, a mere 20 plus years ago, was still a state considered by many to be the bellwether of the country. To voters, ideas, leadership and a real commitment to public service mattered more than partisanship. Ohioans historically are a mixed bag filled with various peoples and cultures capable of producing high achievements in athleticism, art, education, export exploration, industry, science and even politics, I'm trying to make your time limit. Among those achievements began the weaving of numerous threads that bound Ohioans together with a solid work ethic, sense of civic pride, and a will to accomplish more. Common and widely shared values such as these made any city bred, suburb born, or rural raised Ohio and right at home anywhere in Ohio. And those same values were expressed by Ohioans and their public demands for fair political districts in 2015 and 2018. Which brings us here to today. Ohioans have rightly rightly recognized that the skewed sketches wrongly done after 2010 have warped our body politic out of the balance we used to enjoy so prominently on national stage. Gerrymandering has allowed demonization of political affiliation to fester and spread across Ohio like an inoperable tumor. Ohio has become unrecognizable in the face of so many emotional torments, pitting its inhabitants against each other to the point we no longer regard each other as friends and we no longer trust ourselves. In the midst of all that has happened leaders stopped leading because they could afford to, thanks to gerrymandering. And when they stopped leading, they stopped listening, except to their paymasters upon whom political ideology is meaningless. Federal and state legislatures, in our part of northwest and north central Ohio rarely hold public meetings, and when they do, they are typically announced in a few days advance notice on social media with very limited hours. And that's if in rural Ohio, you have internet. Otherwise, a local print media, limited scope, limited scope and resources deliver scant information on an important statewide issues to rural communities. In order for the political process to overcome years of deception and in some cases, dereliction, that has led Ohioans to distrust their own, Ohioans will need to demand much more of their leadership at this time of redistricting. And that's because even after the new lines are drawn, the old misinformed beliefs that still remain gerrymandering help foster. You cannot redraw bigotry, ignorance, pride, prejudice and racism out of existence. They're going to be there, but they can be better addressed this time if Ohio's leaders make it so. I'll skip a little bit, and I'm going to go through my ideas real quick on how we could do that. Hold on, hold public officials accountable by having them hold a set number of public meetings per quarter that are advertised weeks in advance, public officials are used to filing mandatory finance documents. This would be another mandatory requirement for public office. Level the playing field among political opponents during campaigns as much as possible by allowing candidates from independent parties that are legitimately organized or even nonpartisan independents to have the same filing requirements as a Democratic or Republican candidate, party's candidates. By lowering the threshold for independent candidates to run for office, you are encouraged, encouraging future leaders to help shape new discussions among the voting population. That in turn informs incumbents to be more open, refined and responsive in their own campaigns. Re-energize the Ohio electorate, the electorate in connection with adopting new districts by changing Ohio's closed primary system to an open primary by which independents can participate in that election, giving independents who constitute the majority of Ohioans an added voice will help our leaders formulate their policies and views more closely adhering to their constituents desires. We hold forth that every vote count. But we do not do so for every voice when numerous voices are silenced, then the voters are hearing less than the total truth. Gerrymandering reduced our capacity for for free will by limiting our choices. So to counter it quickly, it would be prudent to add more voices and help uniting Ohioans in their quest for truth. The idea that conservatism and liberalism cannot coincide is absurd. They are not mutually exclusive and this need not be a zero-sum game. Liberalism means freedom, and while our notion of they succumb to the whims of time, it's core remains the same, I can choose. Conservatism is not incompatible as it holds a decision making devolve down to the lowest conceivable entity that is the individual and the local community effect, when infecting the populace. It's their freedom to choose. However, our ability to choose and choose wisely, has been severely limited by gerrymandering, lack of public access to elected officials and the outright public corruption of large swaths of voters. Members of the commission, the task at hand is to restore the flower of our democracy, whose fragrance long dissipated once promised hope. And whose former luster inspired dreams for many, but now in all its faded glory, it reeks of cynicism and despair, with only lust remaining for the privileged few. Let's do it right this time commission and bring the people back as well. Thank you. [applause]

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [00:44:14] Thank you for your testimony. Our next witness is Merrill. Merrill Newman, I think have you come and state that for the record, so we'll have it correct. Neiman. From Bexley, Ohio.

**Meryl Nieman** [00:44:47] So members of the commission, thank you for affording me this opportunity. My name, as you said, is Meryl Nieman and I'm from the Columbus area of Bexley. Before I begin my substantive testimony, I must point out what a privilege it is for me to be able to be here today. Most people don't have the luxury of being able to attend a hearing during the workday. Even many members of the commission, apparently. Given that and the rising COVID infection rates in Ohio for future hearings, the commission should allow for virtual testimony and offer evening hearings to broaden and equalize access. I also must note, as I referred to, that the lack of commissioner attendance at these hearings thus far has been deeply disappointing. I hope going forward, this community districting process will be more open, participatory and productive. Now for the substance of my testimony. No matter our color, background or zip code, I think most of us can agree that voters should pick their leaders. Leaders shouldn't pick their voters. Whether we're helping a neighbor schedule a vaccination, hosting a Buckeyes watch party or planting a neighborhood garden. Nobody knows our communities better than the people who live in them. That's why every decade to determine how we will choose representatives and influence policies on issues we care about, like health care and the economy, and funding allocations for schools, hospitals and other services, we come together to draw new district lines. These electoral maps are supposed to ensure each of our votes have equal weight. Each of our voices are equally heard and each of our communities has equal access to government resources, or at least that's what's supposed to happen. But 10 years ago in Ohio, a handful of consultants met secretly on a weekly basis and carved up our neighborhoods into a hodgepodge of misshapen districts to serve the interests of the politicians who paid them rather than our communities. I'm here because this year we have the opportunity, indeed the obligation to establish a stronger, fairer foundation for the next ten years. 2021 is the first time Ohio will be drawing maps using the new rules Ohioans demanded and voted overwhelmingly to approve in 2015 and 2018. These rules were designed to eliminate our current rigged electoral maps and replace them via a transparent process that allows the public to offer meaningful input and in accordance with guardrails to ensure voting districts are drawn to keep communities together, rather than to divide and silence us for certain politicians own personal and partisan benefit. This is an odd redistricting hearing in that the commission isn't sharing any draft maps for us to review. And that's quite concerning, given, as you've mentioned that co-chair Cupp, that we're only days away from that first legally mandated benchmark. I'm confused about how you're going to be making decisions on maps that supposedly haven't even been created as yet in just a few days. Hopefully, this isn't a sign that the commission is just going through the motions of fair restricting that we're a'' here in some sort of elaborate charade. But regardless of your intentions, even if some of you have been meeting in secret and again drawing draft maps that would serve your own personal interests, this time we have law on our side. The constitutional amendments we passed with over 70 percent of the vote. And we'll be watching. If necessary, we will be on social media, we'll be at the State House, we'll be at the courthouse. We will do whatever we must to protect our freedom to vote, ensure all our voices are equally heard and call out anyone who tries to impede that freedom or suppress those voices. We will see that you follow the rules that are now engrafted in our state constitution and that Ohioans get the community districts we deserve. So thank you again. I would welcome since this hasn't been a very participatory process so far, but I'd welcome any questions that you may have or any comments on the timing or the map drawing process.

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [00:50:09] Questions for the witness from the panel? Hearing none. We're here to listen. That's probably why you're not hearing questions. thank you.

**Meryl Nieman** [00:50:16] Thank you. [applause]

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [00:50:31] Our next witness is Benita Khan, also from Bexley, Ohio. Welcome.

**audience member** [00:50:37] Mr. Chairman, could you please request that all those present, including commission members, wear masks?

**Auditor of State Keith Faber** [00:50:48] We're six feet away.

**Benita Kahn** [00:51:06] Good afternoon, my name is Benita Kahn, and I live in Bexley, Ohio, which is House District 18, Senate District 15. Thank you. And Congressional District three. I am testifying today because of the history of unfair practices, lack of transparency and failure to allow, much less accept, public input when drawing maps after the 2010 census. These unfair practices resulted in Ohio voters passing by 71 percent and 75 percent, amendments to the Constitution for a redistricting commission to draw new legislative and congressional districts. Ohio voters wanted to ensure transparency and real public participation in the redistricting process and the creation of districts that are compact, contiguous and do not favor or disfavor either political party. So far, against the clear will of the voters, the transparency and public participation have not been met as shown by the significant delay in appointing members of the redistricting commission. The failure to schedule public hearings in Columbus, which happens to be the most populous city in the state, and the failure to introduce maps to the public prior to the hearings. The impact of the 2010 unfair districts has been clear. The gerrymandered districts skewed heavily in one political direction have resulted in many Ohio voters, including myself, having their voice and vote limited in Congress and lost at the Ohio Legislature. Congressional districts are currently split as everybody has, or several people have mentioned today, 75 percent Republican favored and 25 percent Democrat. The House Senate is split, 75 percent Republican, 25 percent Democrat and the Ohio House 65 Republican, 35 percent Democrat. This skewing does not reflect voter split in Ohio. Since 1856, there has never been a 75, 25 percent party split in presidential elections in Ohio and only three times since that 1856 date has a party gotten 60 percent or more of the vote in a presidential election. Ohio's gerrymandered districts have resulted in politicians taking extreme positions to win primaries, knowing they will win the general election due to heavily skewed districts. This has eliminated the incentive to compromise at the Legislature on issues important to most Ohioans. When you see the percentage of these polls on issues, the skewed districts have also split communities with similar values such as Clintonville and Bexley, residents who live a mere 10 miles apart and are both in urban areas. But Clintonville is in a congressional district that includes areas over 60 miles away, doesn't include Bexley, and is 60 percent rural. It is not possible for one representative to fairly represent these diverse interests. Rather than Ohio voters having the freedom to elect officials who represent the voters issues and positions, the officials have created districts with selected voters who represent the officials position. In closing, there is a couple of things I want to say. One is and this I just noticed as I was sitting here. If you look at the commission, there are two women. But if we had the actual commission representatives, we would have one woman on this panel. If you look in the audience, I would say we have over 50 percent women, if not more here today, I urge you to listen to the women of Ohio who are your voters. [applause] I want to emphasize the importance of having a transparent process with public input that is recognized and taken into account when creating these new districts. This time, the districts must be compact, contiguous, and not favor or disfavor either political party. We, and especially we women, cannot have fair representation if voters voices are silenced. [applause]

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [00:56:26] Thank you for your testimony, our next witness then is Lindsey Coco Burge from Mt. Gilead, Ohio, and I'll have your state your name for the record. So we get the pronunciation correct.

**Lindsey Kohlenburg** [00:56:53] I have one. I'm Lindsey Kohlenburg, and you got that pronunciation correct. Thank you. Good job. I live in Mount Gilead, Ohio, and I want to address the commission members and their designees. Thank you for hearing us today. I really appreciate the opportunity and to address the need for proper and fair redistricting for the Ohio Legislature. I live in Morrow County that is now Ohio Legislative District 87 and Ohio's Senate District 26. I'd like to tell you a true story about a conversation which I found to be concerning. I was part of a team of volunteers who were working with a candidate for office for the Ohio Legislature. It was 2014. On a hot summer weekend in July, our volunteers set up a booth at the Mount Gilead Sweetcorn Festival like we had at the Cardington Festival in June. Both are small towns in Morrow County. The volunteers had also knocked on doors in Bucyrus, Galion, Upper Sandusky and certain parts of Marion, with plans to do more of the same on behalf of our candidate. The incumbent official, who also attended the festival that day, stopped by for a chat as he was familiar with our campaign. After exchanging pleasantries, he said, Why are you going to all this trouble? Don't you know, I will win by 60 points? I remember the exact spot on Main Street where I was standing at the time. Call me naive. As I reflect on that scene today, I call myself foolish. We continued with our campaign, however, but the incumbent officials prediction turned out to be true. As I've watched other Ohio Legislature and Senate election cycles, this trend is indeed true and predictable. Cycle after cycle, the point spread is the same. While Morrow County does tend to vote for one party, I believe the candidates with different views are discouraged from spending the money and the time it would take to overcome the disadvantage presented by the district lines that appeared to lasso the voters, instead of uniting communities. Think of the loss of the diversity of ideas and creative solutions a more robust discussion would bring to the everyday problems that face Ohio families. I noticed something else. It seemed that my Ohio district office hours were not regularly held. They were ill publicized or held during business hours when most people in Morrow County are at work. I know our population is small compared to other towns in the district, but we all pay taxes and do our concerns have less importance? Do some elected officials feel they do not need to listen to their constituents? After all, they'll be elected anyway. I hope the commission understands that Ohioans do want to be active in state government, but were quickly discouraged from doing so. When we do the same thing over and over again and expect a different result, we call that crazy, right? Well, when we gerrymander district lines, why do we expect to create engaged citizens? As you know, Ohioans voted for a constitutional amendment to end gerrymandered districts by 71 percent. That was in 2015, and that was a mandate, in my opinion. I urge the commission to remedy these inequities and allow Ohio citizens like me to truly partner with our elected representatives. Once this is accomplished. I believe our officials will be more motivated to hear the concerns of all their constituents. Better ideas and policies may come to fruition and then better serve the needs of our communities. Thank you very much for your attention. [applause]

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [01:01:32] Thank you for your testimony. Your your testimony will be uploaded to the to the site, then. Patricia. I'm not sure I can get this right, so we'll ask you to also put it for the... Keen? Or something like that. From Mount Vernon.

**Patricia Keen** [01:02:12] Keen is correct. My name is Pat Keen, and I live in Mount Vernon in Knox County., my Ohio District - Senate district is 19 in my Ohio House district is 68. I voted for redistricting reform in 2015 and 2018 because I think District maps should be drawn so that they meet the criteria of compactness, continuity and community integrity. Very importantly, they should also be drawn so that no party is advantaged or disadvantaged by the maps. I think districts should keep counties, cities and townships whole. My current state district is shared with suburban Delaware County and parts of urban Franklin County. Voters from these other counties do not necessarily have the same concerns as voters from rural Knox County. Voters from urban Franklin County are not necessarily represented well by a legislator who also represents suburban and rural voters. I think that districts should be drawn to be impartial. Several other people have mentioned this, but the state of Ohio had approximately a 55 Republican to 45 percent Democratic voter split in 2020. However, due to gerrymandering, the representation in the Ohio Senate is approximately 76 percent Republican and 24 percent Democratic. In the Ohio House the split is approximately 65 percent Republican and 35 percent Democratic. This does not fairly represent the will of the voters of Ohio. Another result of gerrymandering is that legislators end up in safe districts, and this lead can lead to members who do not believe they have to be accountable to represent all their constituents. Districts that are most closely represent the proportion of the citizens would lead to legislators who would feel accountable to all their constituents and a General Assembly that is more representative and accountable to more citizens. You have the power to draw maps that are fair, nondiscriminatory, keep communities together and are politically impartial. The people voted overwhelmingly for a reformed process of redistricting. Please fulfill the promise by creating maps that serve the voters, not the political interests of any party. Thank you. [applause]

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [01:05:00] Thank you for your testimony. And now we'll move to Brian Miller from Gambier, Ohio. Also somewhere in Knox County, I believe.

**Brian Miller** [01:05:22] That's where it's going to sit. Representative Cupp and Senator Sykes, thank you for allowing me to testify today. Hold your.

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [01:05:39] [inaudible] I know that's pretty low, so.

**Andrea Yagoda** [01:05:42] Thank you. My name is Brian Miller and I live in Knox County. Which is in the House district 68 and Senate District 19. I am an advocate for a government that serves the public by listening to them and responding to their needs. Gerrymandering in Ohio has undermined these goals by creating illogical and unwieldy House and Senate districts that disenfranchise voters. We need new Senate and House maps that are compact, keep communities whole and give voters a choice. My county is mostly agricultural and rural. The neighboring territory on all four sides is rural also, and one can drive 10 minutes from the edge of the county in any direction and still be in farmland and with very few signs of suburbanization. Senate District 19 includes Knox and Delaware counties, as well as a long, narrow finger that extends south into Franklin County. The physical terrain needs and, excuse me, and issues of the rural north and the suburban south don't mesh. An elected representative can best speak for the interests of a district that has common threads of history, tradition and culture, rather than one that is manufactured from disparate threads. Excuse me. District, House District 68 is comprised of Knox County and the eastern half of Delaware County, which forms a dogleg shaped piece that extends east and south. Neither the House nor Senate district is compact. Knox County should be placed in a district of mostly rural character that is compact and, if possible, avoids county splits. Gerrymandering, gerrymandered districts such as a Senate District 19 are designed to keep one power, one party in power in perpetuity with little chance for the other party to win the seat. The elected representatives need not pay much attention to the views inconsistent with the mainstream of his party or her party. Yet for democracy to succeed, our elected officials must listen to and be representative of the voters, all the voters in the district, not just those of the same party. When a district leans too heavily to one side or another, that is less likely to happen. The new maps should result in districts that are more competitive, paving the way for elections in which candidates of either party and candidates with with views outside the party mainstream are more likely to win a seat. This way, legislators are more likely to listen to diverse voices and interests in their districts. I urge you to keep these principles in mind when you work to create new maps and elicit the voices of the voters of Knox County and all of Ohio. Thank you for your time and consideration of my request. [applause]

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [01:09:21] Thank you for your testimony. Next is David Pickett from Columbus. Welcome.

**David Pickut** [01:09:54] Good afternoon, my name is Dave Pickut, I'm from Columbus, Ohio. I provided a, some visual aids there. Sorry, I don't have copies for everybody. I've lived in Columbus for 51 years. I care very much about my community, I care very much about all of Ohio. And it does my heart good to hear so many citizens come forward today and deliver a consistent message. [get closer to the mic] I'm sorry. Deliver a consistent message that we're tired of gerrymandering and we want a government that works for the people. I live in Ohio District 24, which describing it quickly takes a piece of northwest Columbus goes west to Hilliard, goes down south to Darbydale, Galloway, parts of Grove City. This is so blatantly gerrymandered it. It just has never represented everyone there. Fortunately, in November, we elected a new representative who's doing a much better job than the past ones. So that was encouraging. If you just think about those three areas and how they're different. The area that I live in is is urban and suburban. When you go west to Hilliard, it is a one of the highest growth areas in the country, so they have some very unique needs to be met. When you go south to Galloway, Darbydale, you know, it's a primarily rural small town area dealing with trying to control development and you know, the same issues, the types of issues you would have there. So it's just very hard for a single representative to effectively represent everyone. I submitted a more reasonable configuration for District 24, and there are numerous tools available today to allow these districts to be configured in a fair manner, and everyone in the audience has access to these tools also for analysis of what ever is finally submitted to the public. So in summary, I just want to say that when you look at Ohio's history and one of the graphics I provided there is if you go back to 1969 and look at the Congressional Districting then it made a lot of sense and pretty simple to follow. When you look at what we have today, it's just beyond comprehension. So Ohioans have spoken overwhelmingly that gerrymandering should be ended. Your constituents are asking that you make changes and please don't fail them. Let's work together in a bipartisan manner and get this taken care of to strengthen our democracy. The entire country is watching what's going on in Ohio. Thank you. [applause]

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [01:13:00] Thank you for your testimony. And now we'll turn the microphone over to Rob Thompson from Oberlin, Ohio. Welcome.

**Robert Thompson** [01:13:28] Good afternoon, commissioners and my friends for fair districts. I'm Rob Thompson from Oberlin, Ohio. I vote regularly in Ohio's 56th House District, 13th Senate District and 4th Congressional District. I do not vote in national elections with my county neighbors 16 miles away in a farming community of Rochester. But instead, I vote with people in the farming community of Minster who live one hundred and sixty miles away. Why? Similarly, there are communities in Ohio that are split into three different State House districts. Why? I don't think our current state and congressional district maps gerrymandered as they are serve Ohioans well. Current maps make it difficult for a legislator to represent all of their constituents. The maps favor politicians with extreme views, left and right, who can win their party's primary election. Extreme entrenched views can lead to bitter rhetoric, little compromise and poor governing. With these problems in mind, in 2017, I collected signatures at my church on city sidewalks and parking lots to make a change in the way Ohio maps are drawn. After 60 plus years, this was my first foray into active politics. Redistricting is a big deal to me. I was pleased to see reforms passed by a large majority of Ohioans. Now we're counting on you to complete the process. I'm hopeful that a new day in Ohio politics and government is about to dawn. Imagine a future where we have state and congressional representatives who are well-versed in all of her constituents specific issues and needs, who don't have to travel so far across the district to meet with voters. Representatives who are more moderate, who can understand more diverse viewpoints, who are more open to compromise. I think compromise will lead to bipartisan bills that serve more people and to a better functioning government. Here are some specific suggestions. I hope you'll start with the mindset that all politics is local. As former U.S. Speaker of the House Tip O'Neill rightly stated. Local means communities. Mapmaking is all about lines and lines are drawn in around and sometimes through communities. So when developing new maps, please consider the community maps developed by citizens working with fair districts and other groups. It's important to keep our communities intact in voting districts. When developing new maps, please consider the maps submitted by Ohioans directly to you and through the district map competition sponsored by fair districts. There are a lot of smart people out there who can assist you, consider this as helpful crowdsourcing. I too decided to try my hand at using the publicly available map software, and I've submitted a new map of my county, Lorain County, for your consideration. I believe it keeps similar communities together and has one of the three districts that has 30 percent, 36 percent nonwhite, making it more possible to have a representative who is a person of color. Most important, please keep in mind that this is a bipartisan effort with the emphasis on BI. In your mapmaking process, please have Republicans and Democrats working together from the start. Make it a communal effort. Please don't have Republicans submit maps and Democrats submit maps and then try to come up with something in the middle. Don't be like other states with map making conditions that already at the outset have split everything along party lines. Ohio citizens established a bipartisan commission and expect you to work together to draw fair maps. Please demonstrate that the process is fully deliberative and bipartisan. Please become a real community of map makers and keep us informed of your activities. In conclusion, fair maps... With fair maps with districts that are compact, follow county lines and do not divide identified communities and are politically competitive are necessary for positive change. You commission members have this challenging, awesome task in front of you. I will be thinking of you, praying for you and hoping, along with all Ohioans for maps that we can be proud of. Thanks for listening. [applause]

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [01:18:11] I thank you for your testimony, and we are going to move to Sean Burns from. Right here in Mansfield, Ohio.

**Sean Burns** [01:18:38] Thank you to the commission for letting us speak today. My name is Sean Burns and I live in Mansfield, Ohio, which is a Congressional District 12, and the state level, Senate District 22 and Ohio District two. Currently, the 12th Congressional District is manipulated to favor one political party. Mansfield resides in Richland County, which is divided into two separate congressional districts. Dividing Mansfield and the surrounding communities, breaks up neighborhoods and people with common goals and interests. Creating districts in this manner has resulted in a district supporting one political party ideals, blocking out opposing ideals or opposing views. Our current congressional representative resides nearly two hours and 70 miles from Mansfield and Richland County. There's no reason for the representative to speak or listen to opposing constituent views when your district is set up to elect only a person from one political party. Our 12th Congressional District has seen this with the last two elected members of Congress that have refused to speak to constituents from opposing political parties when invited to events to present their positions. I have personally witnessed our current representative turn his back and walk away from constituents when asking him questions regarding his stance on an issue. Why should a representative listen to an opposing political viewpoint when your election is secured by a block of voters that has been gerrymandered to favor only you and reduced competition from opposing political parties? In 2015, Ohio voters overwhelmingly supported state legislative redistricting reform, and in 2018, voters followed up by passing congressional redistricting reform. These reforms were placed in the Ohio Constitution, and both reform efforts won in all 88 counties by more than 70 percent of the vote. These reforms focus on encouraging bipartisan mapmaking and establishing rules that focus on keeping communities or political subdivisions together. I voted for these reforms and care that the maps are drawn according to the wishes of the Ohio voters. No one wants people that have different viewpoints not to be heard. All we are saying is that voices should be representative and a fair and balanced manner. Please keep redistricting fair, transparent, nondiscriminatory and politically impartial and fulfill the promise of redistricting reforms placed in the Ohio Constitution by the voters. Thank you. [applause]

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [01:21:34] Thank you for your testimony. Next is Richard. I think it's Gunther from Worthington, Ohio. And I'll ask you also to state your name on the record, please. So we get the pronunciation correct.

**Richard Gunther** [01:21:58] Good afternoon. I'm Richard Gunther, professor emeritus of political science at Ohio State University. I was one of five negotiators who wrote the first draft of what is now Article 11 of the Ohio Constitution. That --.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:22:16] Closer to the mic, please? Closer to the mic, please.

**Richard Gunther** [01:22:18] That set of reforms was approved by a vote of 87 to 10 in the House, 28 to one in the Senate and by 71 percent of the Ohio voters in the referendum of 2015. I'd like to take this opportunity to highlight three important points concerning the changes that we made in the Ohio Constitution or that were already embedded in Ohio or in federal law. First, incumbent protection is no longer enshrined in the Constitution of Ohio. Prior to 2015, there was Section 7(D), which did indeed stipulate that redrawing lines should remain as close as possible to the previous lines. One of the very first things that we agreed to in our negotiations was that this had to go. That retaining that provision would basically make permanent the previous gerrymander. Second, representational fairness is an important component of the Ohio Constitution following our 2015 reforms. Article 11, Section 6(A), by the way, I should have passed out the text of my remarks. I'm sorry. This, by the way, includes a typo it says Article 6 (A), it should be Article 11, Section 6(A) states

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [01:23:54] does happen from time to time, doesn't it?

**Richard Gunther** [01:23:57] Your fingers get too fast on the keyboards. No General Assembly district plan shall be drawn primarily to favor or disfavor a political party. The following section Section 6(B), which I wrote, unequivocally states what a fair map actually should be. Now this language, is not very elegant, but it is quite precise. The statewide proportion of districts whose voters based on statewide state and federal partisan general election results during the past 10 years favor each political party, shall closely correspond to the statewide preferences of the voters of Ohio. In other words, the number of districts leaning towards one party or the other should reflect the preferences of Ohio voters, as expressed in statewide elections over the previous decade. Now I've done a quick calculation of this, which you will see in the appendix that I've added to my remarks. This covers seven elections United States Senator, President, Governor, Secretary of State, Auditor, Attorney General and Treasurer. And over the previous decade, Republican candidates for those offices have received fifty four point three percent of the vote. Democratic candidates for those offices have received forty five point seven percent. To ensure that one political party is not unduly favored over another. The partisan makeup of Ohio's districts should mirror the partisan preferences of Ohio's voters over those 10 years. Section 9 incorporates a number of very, very specific points concerning the potential involvement of the Ohio Supreme Court, and it sticks very closely to the language in Section 6(B), which gives you the same percentages that I mentioned a moment ago. Section 8 includes language that it requires, in case there is, in the absence of bipartisan support for a plan, requires that there be a detailed explanation of how the map that is ultimately adopted does or does not correspond with the voting preferences of Ohioans over the previous 10 years. In short, the Ohio Constitution, following the referendum of 2015, includes numerous elements that specifically reinforce the notion of representational fairness. Finally, federal law requires that legislative districts cannot violate the 1965 Voting Rights Act and that they be drawn in a manner to ensure that voters of color can elect representatives of their choosing. Minority vote dilution by packing or cracking must be avoided. Both of these kinds of gerrymandering are unconstitutional violations of the Voting Rights Act. It is important to note as well that there is no current legal requirement for Ohio to draw majority minority districts in order to comply with the Voting Rights Act. The United States Supreme Court has ruled that a state and relevant community must meet certain preconditions for such a district to be drawn. And Ohio currently does not meet those conditions. A legal opinion rendered by the Ohio Legislative Service Commission on December 11, 2017 concluded quite specifically, no judicial decisions currently require Ohio to adopt minority majority minority congressional districts. If Ohio did so voluntarily, this is part of a packing strategy. That action might be challenged as unconstitutional racial gerrymandering, which is a violation of federal law. Now, the 2015 amendments to the Ohio Constitution were endorsed by an overwhelming majority of citizens and representatives and senators in the General Assembly in 2015. I am confident that the Ohio Redistricting Commission will adopt district boundaries for the Ohio House and Senate in a manner that respects both the letter and the spirit of those reforms. Thank you. Are there any questions? [applause].

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [01:28:29] Thank you for your testimony? OK. Do we have any questions for the witness? Thank you for detailed testimony and the written copy. Next is Laura Robinson Bo=yd from Columbus.

**Laura Robertson-Boyd** [01:29:08] Thank you, 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 live in Columbus in House District 26 and District 15. Hello, Senator Craig. I'm here today to speak both as a representative of an organization and as an individual 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 representative of 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 nonpartisan, 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've been showing up to the State House to advocate for common sense gun safety measures, such as background checks on all gun sales, which 90 percent of Ohioans, including 87 percent of gun owners support. But in the current supermajority controlled legislature, such commonsense measures cannot even get a committee hearing. After the tragic Dayton mass shooting on August 4th, 2019, when Ohioans pleaded with Gov. DeWine to do something, he proposed to increase 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's been proven to increase gun homicides, 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. Fair districts will give us more voice in the issues that matter most to Ohioans, not lobbyists. I'm also here today as a 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 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 was certainly unwelcoming to the LGBTQ community. For the last 10 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 have 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 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. [applause]

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [01:33:24] Thank you for your testimony. Next is Reverend Kurt Walker. Welcome.

**Rev. Kurt Walker** [01:33:53] Good afternoon, members of the commission, my name is Reverend Kurt Walker. I'm a resident of Amherst, Ohio, which is part of the District 56 of the State House of Representatives, currently held by Representative Joe Miller, Ohio State Senate District 13, currently held by Senator Nathan Manning and U.S. 4th Congressional District, currently represented by Congressman Jim Jordan. I appreciate the opportunity to share my thoughts on the work of the commission, but also to speak to those members of the commission who are members of the General Assembly, who will be about working drawing new districts for the United States House of Representatives. As you know, Ohio voters approved a constitutional amendment implementing a new General Assembly redistricting process in November 2015 and a separate constitutional amendment prescribing a new congressional redistricting process in May of 2018. The US congressional district I live in is not compact, it is packed and it is cracked, resulting in a high probability that one group of voters will have less influence than another. That all voices will not equally be heard at the ballot box. This is not representative democracy in action. As I know, most of you have heard or observe, the U.S. congressional map of the 4th District looks like a duck. You may have noticed as I speak, I have a slight Southern drawl. I am originally from Kentucky and moved here with my wife and son some years ago. So each of us could answer a call to the ministry. Excep in instances of the game of college basketball, I have learned to embrace the lovely people of the Buckeye State. And will wholly support efforts to draw a more compact district that looks more like a Buckeye than a duck. In my opinion, aggressive gerrymandering results in the politicians picking their voters instead of the voters picking their representatives. My prayers are with the commission and the General Assembly as they go about the work they have been called by God and the citizens of Ohio to do to serve the people of Ohio, thank you for your time.

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [01:36:19] And thank you for your prayers, we definitely need those this complex work. Next is Jalina, I should have tried to pronounce this first Majestaronavich. All right. We'll have you come forward and you can pronounce it, for the record, from Columbus, Ohio. Welcome.

**Jalina Mastarovich** [01:36:52] Hello. Hello. Hi, my name is Jalina Mastarovich. I'm from Columbus and I live in Senate District three. My own district is split up in a way that doesn't make much sense. I could drive and leave my district and then reenter it again all within 10 minutes. Gerrymandering is bad for everyone, not just for the opposition party. Even the party in power is affected negatively by gerrymandering. It forces candidates to adopt more extreme views in order to capture the votes at the margin of the party. Just like a monopoly in business leads to overpricing gerrymandering in politics leads to overrepresentation. Competition is good both for business and for politics. It keeps politicians accountable, which is the whole point of democracy. I hope you will keep this in mind as you draw your maps because with gerrymandering, Sorry, with gerrymandering in the long run, no one really wins. Thank you for hearing me out. [applause]

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [01:38:08] Thank you for your testimony and thank you for the conciseness of your testimony. We actually can hear it three or four times in the same amount of time, so next is Benjamin Turner, also from Columbus, Ohio. I guess I don't I don't need to add the Ohio, I just need to name a city, you know where that is, right, Senator Craig.

**Ben Turner** [01:38:39] All right. I'm Ben Turner from Columbus Senate District three. I work in the community where I live. I'm lucky to drive five minutes to get to my job, so you can also see why I'm pretty angry about having to drive all the way to Mansfield for this, OK? I'm used to a five minute drive. Y'all are killing me. All right. My brief commute, I leave one district, enter another, exit that district and return back to the same district as my home address. How does that make sense? Since the 1800s, politicians have been drawing lines like these to make it easier to win elections. Gerrymandered district maps are oppressive. Ohioans and Americans all over the country are ready for you to join us in acknowledging this reality and to change it. When communities are divided, there's increased political polarization and voter suppression. The people feel ignored, annoyed and hurt. They lose faith in their officials. The erosion of the spirit from the lack of opportunity and transparency for community input and redistricting process and politicians choosing voters seems more fascistic than democratic. Gerrymandering is destroying democracy and American quality of life. Keeping communities together is the lifeblood of democracy. Redrawing our communities will allow Ohioans to advocate for the the issues that affect our lives. So we need to know that our cities, towns, neighborhoods and streets are intact. We want all federal, state and local election district boundaries to be redrawn based on recent census data, and we want to erase the gerrymandered maps and draw new ones that better represent our communities. We want non oppressive, competitive and bipartisan maps. We want our votes to count. We are asking that you honor your oath and hear your constituents. Ohioans want to be able to advocate for people to make decisions about their own bodies, not the government. Renewable energy, anti-racist policies, criminal justice reform, better schools, better mental health services, regardless of race, religion and creed. Thank you for hearing my concerns. [applause]

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [01:40:39] Thank you for coming.

**staff** [01:40:40] This looks like Greg?

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [01:40:54] I'm going to need some help on this one as well. The first name is Greg. The second last name is to Jovanacar from Galion, Ohio. We'll have you come forward and pronounce your name on the record for us.

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [01:41:18] Welcome. My name is Greg Jevnacar, and I have a Galion address, but I live in Morrow County. Kind of. That's messed up, too. [laughter] I live in a 12th Congressional District, the 87th House District and the 26th Ohio Senate District. I was born in Cleveland when it was the largest city in Ohio, and now I live in Morrow County, which is one of the smallest. So I've been everywhere. In recent years, I've been a election poll worker and became more politically aware of it in 2009 with the soaring debt and in the. What in the what I... What I saw the culture being subverted on many levels, I was disheartened with the results of the 2020 election believing there was a substantial irregularities. We need a forensic audit, but that's another story for another day. But I do fear that many Americans are not voting because of the perceived irregularities. But that's enough for that. I'm puzzled with some of the groups that are for a congressional district redistricting, but they oppose simple things like voter ID. True absentee voting for those people that really can't get out to the polls and paper ballots. But again, that's that to me is fairness and equality. I have one idea to throw out to commission and this came to me just the last couple of days is why don't we start with the largest county and then from there from the midpoint of those counties? Count out the population, and that would be the first district. And then go around to the to the, for example, like Cleveland is... This is the the congressional districts and I and I know you want to talk about the state. But for example, Cleveland has a 1,200,000 people. That's one point eight representatives. So you get two representatives from that, from that population. And they would have to go to an adjoining county, the closest to the midpoint of Geauga County or Cuyahoga County, and pick up the the population there. That seems to fair. I agree with you. Gerrymandering has probably been done by both parties, and it's it's not a good idea because looking at my county, Morrow County, it includes parts of Franklin, and that's quite a ways away. So I think if you if you follow that kind of idea of. Start with the midpoint. And create the districts from that, from there, it would give you the continuity of of the that you want contiguous, contiguous and impartial and just to comment on. Keep referring to, you know, to our country as a democracy, we are not a democracy. We're a constitutional republic. Constitutional Representative Republic and I keep hearing that everywhere. And Ohio is a red state. You know, all the all the the presidential, the Statewide office, except for one senator have all been Republican, so. That's all I had to say. Any questions?

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [01:45:24] Oh, thank you for coming to testify and providing us your ideas. [applause]. Next, we have Catherine Luxton from Columbus. Catherine, Welcome.

**Kit Logsdon** [01:46:03] Katherine Logsdon, many people call me Kit. I live in the 15th district, I'm the congressional orphan here. I submitted written testimony that probably should get to all of you. I just all I want to say is that I, I firmly respect the needs of the small town and the rural districts, and I think that they should have representation in Congress by those who know the issues of their of their constituents in those communities. But I happen to live in an urban community that used to be somewhat rural part of Franklin County, but now it is very, very diverse urban community. And I would just like to say that I would like to see our district redistrict because it is now obsolete. And I won't bother with the rest of it, you can.

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [01:47:08] Well, thank you for your testimony and thank you for bringing a colorful graphic to illustrate.

**Kit Logsdon** [01:47:14] I just needed to represent the 3rd District in Franklin County since 12th and 3rd have been well represented.

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [01:47:23] All right, thank you. [applause]

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [01:47:31] Gary Kennedy from Mansfield, Ohio. You did not have far to drive to get here today.

**Gary Kennedy** [01:47:56] No, actually, not at all. My name is Gary Kennedy. I'm a professor emeritus of mathematics at the Mansfield campus of Ohio State. I thank the commission for coming to Mansfield today and patiently listening to the views of Ohioans. You are charged with constructing a redistricting plan based on the results of the 2020 Census. I urge you to go even further by establishing a redistricting process that can be applied repeatedly, not just in this one census cycle. There are objective criteria for evaluating district maps, and there is an academic literature about this subject. The literature spans the academic areas of political science, public policy, statistics and mathematics. The criteria include compactness, respecting natural and political boundaries, uniting communities of interest and partisan balance. And to a surprising extent, these desirable qualities can be quantified. I urge that the commission and its staff acquaint itself with this literature, and in my written remarks, I have listed several websites that can be used as a starting point for learning about this topic. Although the time allotted for this process is is highly constrained. This being the end of August and you're being required to produce a map by the first day of September, I recommend that the commission conduct its business in the following way. First, establish a set of objective criteria for evaluating proposed district maps. Secondly, apply these criteria to all submitted maps and then finally choose that map, which rates highest according to the criteria. I further urge the commission to stand by its work after producing a fair and workable map, its members should vigorously defend it against attempts to override it and to reintroduce partisan politics into the process. Thank you. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:50:21] I have a question.

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [01:50:22] Professor, Professor Kennedy, we have a question.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:50:28] Thank you so much for your testimony. As a mathematician, one of the questions that we have that we have to grapple with is the concept of repetition, that representational fairness is one of the criteria that's listed in the Constitution. A previous professor spoke of that. Would you be willing to provide your interpretation or analysis of of representational fairness over the last 10 years? Would you be willing to also look at that?

**Gary Kennedy** [01:50:57] I would be willing to look at it. I don't feel that I'm prepared on the spot at the moment.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:51:02] Oh, no, no, not at this point. No, not right now. Oh, I'd be happy to do so later today. [laughter].

**Gary Kennedy** [01:51:09] Yes. Okay.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:51:12] Thank you. We'll share that information with you, and thank you very much. Thank you.

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [01:51:19] Thank you, Professor Kennedy. We appreciate your being here. Next is Kelly Hall from Columbus, Ohio, Columbus, which is in Ohio, right? Senator Craig.

**Kelly Hall** [01:51:43] All right. Hello, good afternoon, my name is Kelly Hall, I am the central Ohio fellow organizer for Planned Parenthood Advocates of Ohio. I'm also a student at Ohio State, the Columbus campus, and my state senator is sitting right here. So thank you so much. As a lot of folks have stated this year, we're coming together to determine how Ohioans will be represented and how funds for schools, hospitals and other essential services will be allocated. Fair maps are the next step to achieving civil rights, equality and liberty and justice in Ohio. I'm here to speak today about the intimate and very real relationship between fair districting and reproductive rights. Simply put, we cannot achieve reproductive rights and equity for all in Ohio if we do not have fair districting and we haven't had that. Time and time again, our elected officials have carved up our communities to divide us and silence certain voices for their own political game. Since the Supreme Court's 1973 landmark decision in Roe v. Wade, we've witnessed state legislatures enact more than 1000 restrictions on abortion. And Ohio has been no exception to this trend. Since the implementation of Ohio's rigged legislative maps in 2011, a total of 30 new harmful and unnecessary abortion bans have been passed by extremist politicians at the Ohio State House. 24 hour waiting periods, clinic closures, forced ultrasounds and requirements to provide medically inaccurate information has made abortion even harder to access than ever. The anti-choice crusades, as I like to say, led by Ohio's extremist politicians, are simply unrepresentative of a large sector of Ohioans and most Americans, and they harm all of us. Most of all, they are actively harming Ohio's low income communities and communities of color whose access to affordable reproductive health care and abortion is most eroded by these severe restrictions. Abortion is legal in Ohio until 20 weeks of pregnancy, and the majority of Ohioans support this broad precept. Furthermore, a 2016 nationwide survey, excuse me, conducted by the National Institute of Reproductive Health revealed that 76 percent of Americans believe abortion should be legal and supported. [applause] And according to the Pew Research Center, roughly half of all Ohioans shared in a 2014 poll that they believe abortion should be legal in all or most cases. If there is broad support for abortion in our state and in our country, how have Ohio State legislators been able to pass such extreme and restrictive laws governing the right to abortion? The answer, unfortunately, lies in the maps. 2011's extreme partisan and racial gerrymandering has left Ohioans unrepresented by unpopular antiabortion policies and politicians, maintaining the anti-choice Republican supermajority has been the main goal of redistricting processes in the past. But it doesn't have to be. This year's community districting process is our opportunity to restore our communities and keep them whole. It is our chance for a future in Ohio where abortion is a protected human right, fully accessible to all. We demand that Ohio, that the Ohio Redistricting Commission leave partisan and racial considerations out of the districting process and our constituent, constituencies will be watching to make sure. The diversity of Ohio's communities and geographies makes our state some of the most fertile ground for a competitive democracy in America. We should accept no less than 44 Democratic House seats and 14 Democratic Senate seats in order to work towards achieving justice and accountability from our Ohio legislator, Legislature. With our state's democracy reinvigorated, all Ohioans can feel empowered and represented in the electoral process. Isn't that the way it's supposed to be? I welcome any questions you have for me today, and I thank you for hearing my testimony. [applause]

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [01:56:09] All right, thank you for offering testimony today. Next witness is Sarah Fernandez from Mansfield, Ohio. Mansfield in Ohio.

**Sarah Fernandez** [01:56:41] Hello, thank you for being here today. My name is Sarah Fernandez, and I am a voter in Ohio Congressional District 12. I'm here as a representative, or as a resident of Mansfield, to give testimony in support of fair and ungerrymandered districts in this state. The voters in the Mansfield area are split into two congressional districts, and this has caused our voices and our votes to be muted in many issues. It is imperative that the redistricting committee create maps that allow my community to participate in our government. The lack of a solid voting community in Mansfield means that our community is divided into sharing our concerns with two representatives who also have constituents and very different demographics. By breaking the Mansfield, Ontario, Madison communities, the particular needs of our community are getting overlooked by less populated populated areas facing different needs. Mansfield was once a manufacturing city, and while there are still many factories in the area, the pay is often less than needed, and not union protected. The growth here in Mansfield has been in the medical field, in the retail field, and they are now a major source of employment and growth over the last 10 years here. Within this community, we have branches of some of the biggest hospital systems in the state, including Cleveland Clinic, Nationwide Children's, Ohio Health, and Akron Children's, as well as many trusted local offices with practices that see generations of families. This growth is important, and in order to protect this growth, we need representatives and legislations, and legislators, that encourage progress. One current issue as an example are the infrastructure bills being considered at the federal level. Mansfield could certainly benefit from many items on these bills. One area that I would particularly like to see improvement on is our public transportation. Transportation in this area is commonly cited as a barrier to getting and keeping a job. The ability to provide money for better public transport in our county and in the city would be a major boost to our local economy. As the district sits right now, attempts to inform local voters about the issues are complicated because two different representatives are getting a message from only half of a community. Our voices are not being heard as a collective. I understand that there are many factors involved in creating a new district map. I do, however, request that this commission consider the needs of communities when making these districts. The idea of fair districts doesn't just mean that political parties have more equitable chances. Fair district means that the citizens are better equipped to participate in local politics. This area deserves candidates in voting districts that allow us to fully represent our unique community. Citizen partnership, participation is ideal. When more people engage in the government and community, everyone prospers. This community should be dedicated to creating districts that encourage active citizens. The committee has a duty to provide all Ohio, to prove to all Ohioans that their votes matter. Finally, I would encourage you to listen to continue to listen to the public, the citizens commission that has given you maps and the various organizations that have come together to support fair districts. Thank you. [applause]

[02:00:19] Thank you. Thank you for your testimony. Next witness is Shelly Ilinka, I think. And we'll have you pronounce it on the on the record. Is. Is Shelly still here? I don't have any town or anything, so I don't know how to tie it any closer. All right. In that case, we will call Tim Olantilon from Columbus. Colin Marozzi from Columbus. Welcome.

**Collin Marozzi** [02:01:37] Good afternoon. My name is Collin Marozzi, and I'm a policy strategist at the American Civil Liberties Union of Ohio. Thank you to the Ohio Redistricting Commission for this opportunity to testify and the interest of time I will forego the rest of my introduction. As the commission turns for the first time in Ohio's history to the task of drawing fair and representative maps, we remind you of the need to comply with the following. First, Ohio's 2020 census data reveals several trends that make the composition of the state of Ohio noticeably different than that in 2010. The majority of Ohio's counties shrunk in population in most rural areas, but also city centers like Cleveland and Toledo. Meanwhile, the population has boomed in Ohio's capital and the suburbs surrounding Columbus. Population has also grown in the Cincinnati metropolitan area, the Columbus and Cincinnati urban and suburban regions made up for the population losses elsewhere. Franklin County grew by more than hundred and sixty thousand people, a thirteen point eight percent increase. Neighboring Delaware and union counties both grew by more than 20 percent. However, Ohio's population in total only grew by two point three percent, more slowly than the rest of the nation, resulting in the loss of a congressional seat. The fact is, if not for a sizable population growth in Ohio's minority communities, the state would have ended the decade smaller than it started it. The commission must account for these demographic shifts when drawing new maps. Ohio's stagnating population should incentivize this commission to create fair and representative districts and end the blight that gerrymandering has inflicted on the people of Ohio, according to public testimony to this commission. The people of Ohio feel left behind. Victims of a gerrymandered system that perpetuates partisan extremism stifles competitive elections, and it emboldens legislators to neglect their constituents. Chris Warshaw, associate professor at George Washington University, wrote on the effects of gerrymandering has on political attitudes. And his research found data that, quote, "suggests that partisan gerrymandering not only distorts the link between elections and the Legislature, it undermines Americans faith in democracy itself." End quote. In light of witness testimony, it is evident Ohioans faith in their government and representation needs to be restored. Next, we want to focus the attention of the commission on its obligation to comply with Article one, Section 6 of the Ohio Constitution. The new requirements in Article 11, Section 6 were passed through ballot measure issue one in 2015 with overwhelming public support, winning over 71 percent of the vote. Not only does the Ohio Constitution mandate compliance with Section 6, Compliance with section 6 is the only way to ensure this commission's legitimacy in the eyes of Ohio voters. The population and jurisdiction splitting rules of sections three and four are but a means to an end. Creating a General Assembly map plan that complies with the standards prescribed in Section 6 is the ultimate goal. The end product of this commission must be a map that provides for proportional partisan representation, and that does not primarily favor one political party over another. In this era of intentional extreme partisan gerrymanders, Ohio's Section 6(A) provides our citizens with an essential safeguard by removing any one political parties desired outcome from this process. In addition, Sectio mandates that the commission draw a General Assembly map in which the statewide proportion of districts reflects the statewide partisan vote share over the last decade. In 2015, millions of Ohioans supported issue one, not because it allows for 10 percent variance in Ohio's ratio of representation and not because it creates a procedure for determining incumbency following Senate boundary line changes. The millions of Ohioans who supported Issue one did so because it promised to deliver fair, proportional and bipartisan districts, and fulfilling that promise should be the goal of this commission. We compiled data from all statewide partisan elections between 2012 and 2020. This data provides not only a close look into the statewide partisan preferences of Ohio voters, but also demonstrates how far our current map deviates from the essential protections of Section 6(B). In 2020, Republicans received just over half of the votes for statewide partisan races, but won nearly two thirds of the State House seats and more than three fourths of the state Senate seats. This level of variance violates the new rules established in Section 6(B), as the current map has afforded Republicans disproportionate representation in both the State House in the state Senate. In fact, over the past decade, Ohio Republicans have never had less than a six percentage point advantage in the State House and a 10 percentage point advantage in the state Senate. Since 2014, the statewide vote share for Republicans has dropped, while their share of seats in the General Assembly has grown. Tables one and two at the bottom of my testimony, which was submitted online, demonstrates the discrepancy in statewide election vote totals and the allocation of General Assembly seats over the past 10 years. Section 6(B) requires this commission to create a General Assembly map with minimal variance between the vote share for all statewide partisan elections and legislative seats. And we look forward to finally ending an era where the representation in the General Assembly does not match the will of Ohio voters. Lastly, we remind the commission of Article 11, Section 1(C) which charges the commission to seek public input on the proposed plan because meaningful public input requires community members to first critically analyze the proposed map. We ask the commission, share the proposed map in a form that supports public interaction, such as a machine readable electronic ESRI shaped file or a CSV block equivalency file. Meaningful public input also requires adequate time between a maps introduction and the constitutionally required public hearings. Adequate time is needed to conduct a thorough review and analysis before informed comments can be delivered to this commission. We ask the Commission to allow for days, not hours, between the maps' introduction and the subsequent hearings. Thank you to all the commissioners for your service in this vital task for our democracy, and I'm happy to answer any questions.

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [02:08:56] Thank you. [applause] Seeing no questions, we will then call Tammy Wilson as our next witness from Delaware.

**Tamie Wilson** [02:09:27] Hello. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Tamie Wilson and I'm from Delaware, Ohio. From the 12th Congressional District. I came across this tweet the other day and it just gave me such extreme alarm, and I just want to read it to you. It says, "this won't be my most popular tweet, but Republicans should look out for Republicans. And when drawing the lines of apportionment, we won. Obama taught us that elections have consequences. This is a red state. Treat it as such, voters value a spine." That tweet? To my surprise, it was actually made by the chair of Hamilton County's GOP, Chairman Alex. So it just really disturbs me. I mean, we are here to discuss redistricting and fair representation. The Declaration of Independence, it claims that all men are created equal. The First Amendment of the United States Constitution gives us the freedom of speech. The 14th Amendment addresses citizenship rights, equal protection under law, and the 15th Amendment prohibits the government and each state from denying a citizen the right to vote. The Civil Rights Act banned discrimination from disadvantaged groups. It is well known that upper income voters tend to cast their votes Republican, while those at the bottom of the income ladder tend to vote Democratic. Redistricting in favor of Republicans, as stated in that tweet by the chair of the GOP, is a way of discriminating against lower income and minority voters, which goes against our Civil Rights Act, the first 14th and 15th Amendment. Franklin Roosevelt's proclamation said, "We are a nation of many nationalities bound together by the unity and freedom and equality." Our founding father, Thomas Jefferson, he worried that officials might come to believe that public office was theirs by right. It is evident that tweet shows his fears have come to fruition. Not all Ohioans are Republicans, so we need fair districts to give voice to all people. We also must have districts that draw represent, that are drawn so representatives are in close proximity to their constituents. My representative lives over two hours away. I've never met him. He's never met me. He doesn't know me or the community, our needs. Therefore, he doesn't represent us. He hasn't been to my city, but he has been to Texas to visit the border, which is why I am seeking election to the U.S. House of Representatives to represent the 12th congressional district of Ohio. Redistricting is necessary to reflect the population of communities, and the voice of the people can be heard. Redistricting was not created so politicians can choose their voters that will guarantee their victory in elections. It is absolutely imperative that we have fair district lines, so the voices of all people can and will be heard in our elections. Our new district lines should be a bipartisan reflection of the community so the people can choose who they want in office and may the best woman or man win. I respectfully request that you expedite this process so I and other candidates may have the opportunity to serve and meet our constituents without knowing the district lines. Of course, we do not know who our constituents are. I thank you for fulfilling your duty to serve Ohioans. I know you guys are tired. It's been a long day. I appreciate you doing your duty with honesty and integrity and united we can get it done. Thank you.

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [02:14:00] Thank you for your testimony and the dramatic conclusion. [laughter] The next witness is Catherine Goldman from Mansfield.

**Catherine Goldman** [02:14:29] Thank you very much for coming to Mansfield. I have to tell you, first of all...

**audience member** [02:14:33] I can't hear you, talk in the mic.

**Catherine Goldman** [02:14:33] My name's Cathy Goldman. OK, thanks. I'm afraid to touch it now. My name is Cathy Goldman, I'm from Mansfield. I've lived here since I was 10 years old, and I can't tell you how shocked I was. First of all, to see that you all were coming here. Nobody comes here. And that's partly because of gerrymandering. Right? I will tell you, I came... I'm a 65 year old white middle class woman. All right. I have there's a voting block that I'm a part of that is becoming a little more left leaning than we have been in the past. It's an important voting block, and I want to tell you my history so you know a little bit more about that voting block. I came to the Fair Districts movement back when I first heard about it, collecting signatures for the petitions to get the amendment on the ballot. I can't tell you how easy that was. Now, I don't know if you know we live here. Well, some of us, I think there's been previous testimony. Mansfield's kind of split up, you know, are we are cracked and baked or whatever the heck it is that you all do. But. We have a crazy design of a district. We went all the way up here in Mansfield were obviously stuck up into to dilute whatever's going on in suburban Columbus and then all the way down east of Columbus and south again to dilute any liberal leaning in Columbus. But when I went around trying to get signatures for the petition, if you could get somebody stop long enough to talk to a stranger, all you had to do was say, "See the map? We're here to do something about this map. Does this map look fair to you? Does this map look like anybody cares what you in Mansfield think?" No, clearly. People aren't dumb. All they had to do is look at that map and know somebody is deciding something. And it's not me. It's not me, the voter. I will tell you there was only one person and I collected hundreds of signatures. There was only one person who ever said no, and I hate to generalize, but it was a 60 year old white man out from the country, and he straight out said to me, Hey, this is working really well for me. Why? Why would I do anything different? Good luck to you. No way I'm signing your petition. So what does that do? We're not dumb, right, people are not dumb. So what that does is it sows the seeds in people like me who feel like we don't, we can't be heard with our vote. Nobody cares about our vote. We have been manipulated to a situation where our vote doesn't matter. So what do we do? How do we be heard? What are our options? You know, protest is where this one went, OK? And at the time, Pat Tiberi was our congressman, federal congressman, the affordable care... I don't even know some kind of a health issue. Indivisible 12 kept staging town halls. Pat Tiberi refused to attend. It was so hilarious that they got to the point where they made this thing a Flat Pat. I don't know if you're familiar with the little children's book, but there was a Flat Pat who would stand in attendance at these meetings and Flat Pat would stand there dumb. Well, there was a group of people who decided it was time to follow. Where is Pat Tiberi going instead of town halls? I went to one of them, I was, out of district at some kind of a dinner while a town hall was being attended. There was, you know, 10 or 12 of us waving a few signs. It wasn't a big deal, but he knew we were. There the next week, I'm a lawyer, I'm a member of the Chamber of Commerce here in Richland County. And the Chamber of Commerce had invited him to a luncheon. I attended the luncheon. You know, wolf in sheep's clothing. I had my little suit on. He didn't know what I was, and he makes repeated smug comments about how smart he was to avoid the protesters this time. They didn't know where he was and they weren't here today and wasn't that smart of him? Well, amazingly, because I was the wolf in sheep's clothing, I got called on. I said, You know, honorable representative, do you realize why people are following you around and protesting? Do you realize that it's because you won't hear them? You won't listen to them. You only will listen to people here at the chamber. You will only listen to your little tiny base constituency, not the other, that the rest of us is. And you know what he did? He laughed. He just flat out laughed. He didn't care. And he thought it was funny. So, however, many years, 10 years ago, when these lines got drawn. There was some thinking going on, there was motive and there was an intent. I'm an old prosecutor. I've prosecuted murder cases. The, so I think about things with respect to criminal mental state, criminal intent and what they are. Negligent homicide, that's a knowing mental state. You know what you're doing. You didn't necessarily intend the consequence. Murder is purpose, purpose to kill. Aggravated murder is with prior calculation and design. And what happened here in Ohio 10 years ago was aggravated murder of voting rights. [applause] You all have the chance to fix that. You all have the chance to engage in restorative justice. Admit that was wrong. Do the right thing. Be fair, your mothers expect that of you. And we all mothers here, you know, are my voting block full of mothers expects the same? And I ask you, please, that's it. Thanks. [applause]

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [02:21:39] All right. Thank you, we have five more witnesses here for the time, so if we can can move along. That would be great and yet still say what you want to say. Next witness is Sherry Reese Vaught from Mansfield? And we'll have you put your correct pronunciation of the record.

**Sherry Vaught** [02:22:15] Good afternoon, commission. My name is Sherry Reese Vaught, and I'm a resident of Mansfield and I'm a teacher at Prospect Elementary, that's not very far from my house. And I left my second grade class and rushed over here to tell you that people in Mansfield count. I feel strongly that as a teacher in public education, that. I'm sorry... I'm going to feel strongly that we all people should have a right to have a voice in our country. That's one of the reasons I became a school teacher was because an educated electorate is important. And we've heard lots of people already today say and just the lady last, say that people that are educated. It's possible for you to look at what's going on and realize that we're not being represented. And so I'm here. I can say a lot of things I say, I put my stuff in online, so you'll have my stuff. But all I want to say is that I want you to count all of us. I want all of us to have a right to vote and to have our votes count. That's the most important thing. And since I live here in Mansfield, I will say this. Since Mansfield, I do a lot of voter reg and and do things for League of Women Voters. And so many times people tell me that it doesn't matter. They won't take the time to register to vote because they don't think their votes matter. And maybe I'm old school and maybe I'm idealistic, but I do think our votes matter and I try to get them to do what they need to do. But this kind of gerrymandering really separates people from their vote, from from the processes that can create a more just society. I do want to say that I don't think that... We just heard about Mr. Tiberi. When when representatives don't feel like they have to work for their, for the vote, they can become complacent. We've heard others talk about how people have to become more extreme and gerrymandering hurting even the people that are in power. And that seems so right. When representatives have to work a bit for votes, when they have to fully represent their districts, they may be more willing to work to find solutions. They may work across partisan lines, and that can create less polarization, both in Congress but also in society. So. Compromise is the backbone of democracy. I teach my second graders that. We talk about being fair and listening to the other person and trying to come up with something that we can both live with. And gosh, if if second graders can do it, I really hope we can get that. [applause] And I want to say this, I don't say this because what you're getting ready to do is not easy. I do not envy your positions and I, with others will be praying and thinking of you as you go through this process. But I want you to know that it's important and I wanted, and I left school so that you could hear that from me. I'm glad there are other people here. So John Dewey, the father of public education, I gotta end with that, said that democracy has to be born again in every generation. And education is its midwife. I firmly believe that. And I really, really hope that you will work hard to find bipartisan maps that work from Ohio that give everybody a right to vote and be heard. Being born rich or poor, brown or pale in the city or in the country, the countryside should not decide if a citizen has a vote that counts. Thanks again for this chance to speak to you. [applause]

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [02:26:30] Thank you for being here and thank you for being a teacher. We all know teachers, that inspired us and helped us along the way. Next witness is Eric Miller, also from Mansfield.

**Eric Miller** [02:26:51] Thank you. Thank you for the time you've spent with us today. I've spent much of my life working to protect the animals that are native to Ohio. And yet, as I talk to you about the job you're going to be doing, I'm going to say something that I've never said before in my life. No snakes, no ducks. No salamanders. Thank you. [applause].

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [02:27:29] You didn't put your occupation on there, but you may be a poet, I'm not sure. Next witness is Timothy O'Hanlon from Columbus. We believe he may be written only testimony at this point, so it'll be on the record. Next witness is Stephen Garret from Centerville, Ohio.

**Steven Garrett** [02:28:07] Good afternoon. Welcome, ladies and gentlemen of our Legislature. I testified 10 years ago before a very similar hearing. I did that in Florida because I was a Florida resident back then. Midway through the decade, we relocated here. I was chagrined to see what happened after the redistricting in Florida, despite my own efforts. And I was chagrined to see what was happening in the state where I lived previously as well. I'd like to share with you some of my testimony from that previous hearing. I think it's still very relevant. sometimes some of it because the ideas are enduring, some of it because what I had hoped for and advocated for has not come to pass. I've heard many concerns raised about redistricting that it respect and honor federal civil rights laws and that it respect and honor the voters wishes for compact districts. I echo those concerns. I've also heard concerns that these goals were in conflict. I urge you to recognize this is a false dichotomy, meaning both goals may be more challenging than treating it as either or, but meaning both is assuredly possible. But beyond this, I challenge you to champion diversity within the districts you draw, not of age or race or any demographic at all, but diversity of ideas. Our nation is in desperate need of intelligent, considerate civic debate, and the surest way to squelch that is to craft districts in which the outcome of a general election is a foregone conclusion. Uncompetitive districts debase the value of each incremental vote, rendering it virtually meaningless. Competitive districts raise up the value of incremental votes and encourage citizen participation. Uncompetitive districts teach our children that those in power can act to protect their own interests at the expense of the people's. Competitive districts, place the people's interests first and encourage our children and all citizens to reflect on what truly constitutes their interest. Uncompetitive districts breed distrust, cynicism and apathy. Competitive districts enliven debate, engage voters and bring accountability to the fore. Many may say that these are fine ideals, but that you will choose instead to create districts to protect your own security and office. My friends, I submit that such thinking reflects another false dichotomy. I suggest that security in office is completely compatible with competitive districts. I submit to you the true job security for a public servant rests in consistent delivery of exemplary public service. And that this is what makes it possible for her or him to consistently win vibrant, competitive and contested elections. Ladies and gentlemen, your unwillingness to craft competitive electoral districts would be the clearest possible evidence of your own suspicion that you are unworthy of office, that you would not win a tough, well contested election in a competitive district. I fear you may and choose instead to craft districts that if you'll forgive me, any jackass or respectively, pachyderm could win. Show your belief in your own worthiness and show your belief in your constituents whose government this is. Craft districts that are respectful, honorable, legal, compact and competitive. I thank you. [applause[

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [02:32:00] Thank you for presenting testimony today and next witnesses, Amy Burns from Mansfield.

**Amy Burns** [02:32:17] Thank you. I first want to thank everybody in the audience for staying. I know a lot of people have left, I forgot to fill out the form, I submitted my testimony by computer. I didn't know I had another form to fill out. So anyway, I finally got that done and I have a chance to speak. Thank you for people who came from Columbus, from Mount Vernon, from all parts of the state to hear this. And thank you for giving me a chance to to speak now. I live in Mansfield, Ohio. That's Congressional District 12, which is represented by Troy Balderson. And Senate District 22, represented by Mark Romanchuk. And I see I see the names of two of the of the members of the commission. So I want to I want to say thank you for coming. Thank you for representing the missing members. And because there are people missing, I do have packs of postcards if you want and you haven't already written to them. I have packs with their addresses so that they can hear from you directly and not through their through their representative. So I have plenty of these with the addresses ready. The district maps that were created in 2010 in Ohio split Richland County into two districts. The 12th is served by Troy Balderson, who lives in Zanesville, 70 miles away, and then the 7th District is served by Bob Gibbs, who lives in Wooster. And we never see that guy. Ohio's... And he lives like, not that far away. Troy comes, though, you know, to get the money. Ohio's current maps have resulted in 12 of the 16 districts. Seventy five percent of them are represented by one party, essentially allowing the Republican Party to pick their voters instead of allowing voters to choose them. This is not how democracy is designed to work. Ohio's gerrymandered map essentially silences my voice in our democracy. It allows politicians with extreme positions and views to enforce those positions onto all of their constituents. How can someone from as far away as Zanesville, which is Muskingum County, 70 miles away? Here's Mansfield. And who represents at least seven other counties between there and Richland County support the unique needs and issues that impact our struggling city with failing businesses, struggling schools, industries and racial tension. How can Gibbs, who lives in a district that is made up of 10 largely rural counties, cornfields, represent the urban parts of Richland County. Balderson and Gibbs campaign on caring about job creation and the economy. But then they completely dismiss, dismiss those issues in Richland County, instead denying the impacts of gun violence, the science of COVID, the legitimacy of the last election and who have an obsessive focus on women's bodies in their votes. Since 2010, District 7 and 12 have offered supremely qualified Democratic candidates who have been unable to compete because the current maps are rigged in favor of the party and control. Nobody here is saying that people with different views shouldn't be heard. All we are saying is all voices should be represented in a fair and balanced manner. Currently, wholly conservative voices are using a rigged system to force their agenda in our state. Those voices should not be the only voices heard in districts that are made up of many, many counties. Thank you. Anybody who hasn't gotten these just fine me after. [applause]

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [02:36:36] Thank you. Thank you for being here to present testimony. And we're going back because Shelly Bylica by that was, of course, missed earlier, so we're giving you the opportunity to speak to the commission.

**Shelly Bylica** [02:36:54] Yes, thank you. Mask on or off?

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [02:37:07] You can take it off while you're speaking.

**Shelly Bylica** [02:37:11] All right, thank you. Well, good afternoon, my name is Shelly, but like it and I am a lifelong resident of northern Ohio, I've been a registered voter in Shelby for the past 13 years and I've also been a voter and Ashlyn and Portage counties. And I am here to relay various experiences that I had working in a local library here in Richland County that have led me to propose that we make sure that districts are redrawn in ways that make it easier for voters to meaningfully participate in democracy. Please redraw boundaries in districts and more geographically concise patterns and equidistant fashion around public spaces where people can gather to deliberate, discuss and debate the issues of the day. Please consider districts which roughly follow county lines and other existing jurisdictions. I worked as a reference librarian for eight years in a small town in Richland County. One of the most annoying questions that I would receive was Who are my representatives? Then I looked at the map and saw that districts were drawn ways that were long and narrow and wide and what? The ways that the lines have been drawn are not very user friendly. And I really have come to feel that this is detrimental to civic participation. Lines are drawn in ways, and if they were intentionally and drawn in ways that grossly neglect easy recognition of districts by constituents, it has one horrible effect that cannot be overlooked. To exclude people from meaningful and informed civic participation. Please fix this now. Easily recognizable legislative districts, which feature centrally located gathering places and, you know, you have to remember, I have largely lived in more small town and rural places here in Ohio. And you know, now unlike cities where you have convention centers and whatnot, if you're trying to draw a rural district, the center is not always that well-defined. There may be a city, there may not be, so on and so forth. But I really, really need to emphasize the need for in-person places for people to meet and talk face to face. I've come deeply concerned about the dehumanization that has come about when people's civic participation is largely via social media. In real life, if I am having problems with a friend, family member or boyfriend or whatnot and it's been through a text based communication, I say, OK, let's make this a phone call. If a phone call doesn't work, I'll say, Hey, let's do it. OK, OK. So I only have one minute left. But yeah, but, no, we lose the face to face communication in our civic discourse. We start to lose our humanity. We start to lose our humanity. We lose our common ground. We lose our common ground. It's a breeding ground for the level of division that we are seeing in this country, and America's enemies are happy to hop on these fault lines to be ready to divide and conquer us. Let's not let them do that. Let's redraw districts that are geographically concise, that have meeting areas in the middle. Make it parks. Make it stadiums. Make it public libraries. When I used to work at the Library here in Richland county, there was an older lady and a middle aged gentleman, the lady, I'll call her Karen. This gentleman, I'll call Mark. They used to debate politics and football over newspapers every single day. It was annoying. But then, as years rolled by, I came to realize that they were modeling something important. They were modeling friendly debate. Time came when this lady, you know, they reached an age. She was starting to get too old to come into library anymore. I would. I heard that Mark would stop by Karen's house every now and then. Stop and see how she is. Well, we lose this in these online forums. So even in rural districts, please consider drawing them around some sort of centers where people can meet in person. And please consider turning a blind eye to things such as rural, urban, Republican or Democrat. Please care more about how well this democracy functions than who necessarily wins next election. I thank you so much for your consideration of these ideas and being here to listen to all these today.

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [02:42:44] Yeah, well, thank you for attending and some very interesting, important observations. Thank you.

**Shelly Bylica** [02:42:49] You're welcome. Any other questions? [applause]

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [02:42:57] All right. Are there? That's the all the witness slips we have. Is there anyone else who wishes to offer testimony today? Who's here to do that? All right, if not, seeing none, please note that written only testimony submitted through the website for this hearing will be posted on the commission website and distributed to all members of the Commission. As an administrative note, all written testimony received as today, as of today, not previously attributed to a hearing date or location will be entered into the record for the Mansfield Regional hearing. And before we adjourn, I would first of all, like to thank all of you for coming and presenting your testimony to the commission, but also the Ohio State University, Mansfield campus and Dean Norman Jones for hosting us today in this site. Is there any further business to come before this regional hearing of the 2021 Why are redistricting commission? Seeing none, we stand adjourned. [applause]