

Hello Co-Chairs Cupp and Sykes and members of the Ohio Redistricting Commission,

My name is Sherry Reese Vaught and I am a second grade teacher at Prospect Elementary School in Mansfield. I am also a resident of Mansfield, Richland County. I felt strongly enough about redistricting to leave school to speak to you today.

Voting is one of the most important things people in democracies can do. Unfortunately, many people do not think their vote matters. Partisan maps lead to long serving incumbents that do not always represent the totality of voices in their districts. It can be very demoralizing and defeating for those in a minority in a district to continue to vote when it seems like they cannot win! Fair voting maps lead to more participation by all the electorate and can lead to better governance.

When representative must work a bit for votes, when they must fully represent their districts or lose their seats, they may be more willing to work to find solutions. That work across partisan lines leads to less polarization both in congress and in our society. Compromise is the backbone of democracy! Unfortunately, it seems that many representatives have lost the willingness to compromise because their seats are safe. That is not the way it should be!

I am here to urge this commission to do what the citizens of Ohio voted for: make fair voting maps. Ohio's voting maps should reflect the faces and voices of Ohio. Thank you for these public meetings and I hope you have a lot more. I want to be able to proudly say that in Ohio, we have fixed our gerrymandering problems and worked together to be fairer to all voters. Please deliver a 10-year bipartisan agreement on voting maps.

John Dewey, the father of American Public Education, once said that "Democracy has to be born again in every generation and education is its midwife." I am a public-school teacher because I believe in our democracy. Please make election maps more impartial. Being born rich or poor, brown or pale, in the city or countryside should not decide if a citizen has a vote that counts.

Thank you again for this chance to speak about the importance of voting and fair voting maps.