



Ohio Environmental Council

Ohio Redistricting Commission Testimony Emily Bacha September 13, 2021

To the honorable members of the Ohio Redistricting Commission:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony for your consideration. My name is Emily Bacha and I'm providing testimony today on behalf of the Ohio Environmental Council (OEC) and myself as a concerned citizen. I oppose the district map proposed by Senate President Huffman and support the map submitted to this commission by the Ohio Citizens' Redistricting Commission.

I grew up in a southeast suburb of Cuyahoga County and currently reside on the near west side of Cleveland. Over the past 10+ years, I have worked in a number of community-facing environmental education, advocacy, and engagement roles which have taken me across Northeast Ohio; through these experiences, I have seen the vastly different environments Northeast Ohio residents call home.

In particular, my work in the city of Cleveland has illustrated a history of environmental injustice, the disproportionate exposure of communities of color and low-income communities to environmental hazards such as air pollution, toxic wastewater, and lead exposure. Years of intentional disinvestment in formerly redlined Cleveland neighborhoods and nearby inner-ring suburbs on the east side have resulted in an aging housing stock riddled with lead paint¹ ² and lead-in-water³ issues; declining tree canopy cover⁴; proximity to legacy brownfields⁵; as well as poor air quality that has been deemed as "failing" year after year by the American Lung Association.⁶ Climate change impacts—especially more frequent heatwaves and increased precipitation—exacerbate these environmental hazards for residents.

Without a functioning and fair democracy, Ohio will continue to perpetuate such environmental injustices—not just in Northeast Ohio, but across the state. Under our current maps, Ohio has many districts that crack apart communities. Unfortunately, the map submitted by Ohio Senate President Matt Huffman and currently under consideration by the Ohio Redistricting Commission perpetuates the cracked and packed districts of the past.

¹ Cleveland Plain Dealer:

<https://www.cleveland.com/metro/2019/01/after-decades-of-promises-cleveland-children-still-poisoned-by-lead.html>

² Lead Safe Cleveland: <https://leadsafecle.org/>

³ Cleveland Water Department: https://www.cleveland.com/metro/2016/10/cleveland_water_releases_infor.html

⁴ Cleveland Tree Coalition, 2020 Cleveland Tree Canopy Progress Report:

<http://www.clevelandtrees.org/2020/08/27/2020-cleveland-tree-canopy-progress-report/>

⁵ Ohio EPA, Ohio Brownfield Inventory: https://epa.ohio.gov/derr/SABR/brown_dtb/browndtb

⁶ American Lung Association, 2021 State of the Air Report:

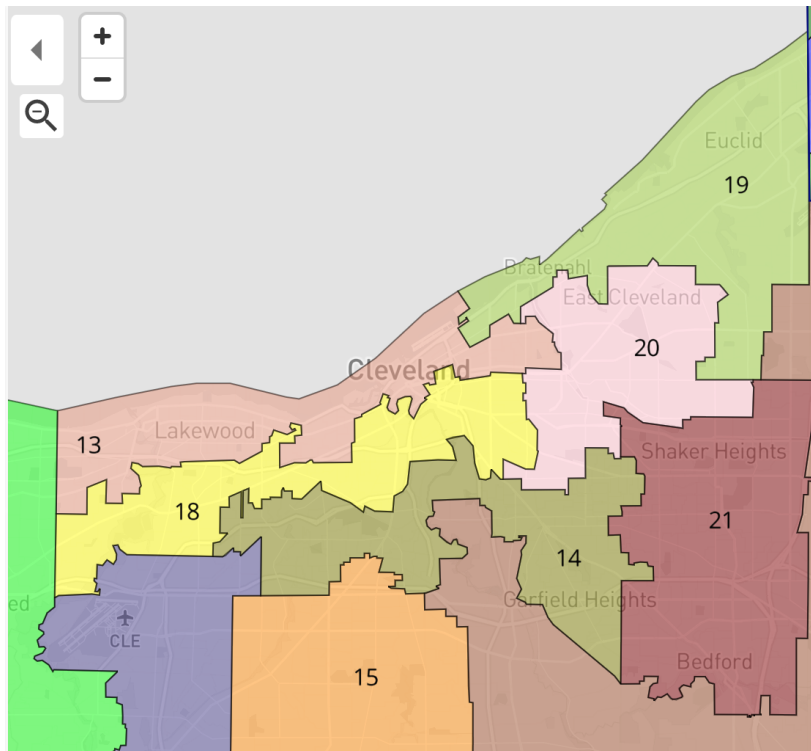
<https://www.lung.org/media/press-releases/cleveland-sota-2021>

Specifically, proposed House Districts 13, 14, 18, 19, 20, 21 and 22 crack apart Cleveland east side communities, where the majority of Cleveland’s Black residents and residents of color call home. These communities also bear the highest environmental justice burden locally. According to the U.S. EPA’s EJSCREEN environmental justice mapping tool,⁷ these communities face the highest National Air Toxics Assessment cancer risk, highest lead paint indicators, and are in close proximity to hazardous waste sites. The deliberate cracking of these communities dilutes their voice and their power to advocate for a healthier environment for their families and their neighbors.

Ohioans deserve better.

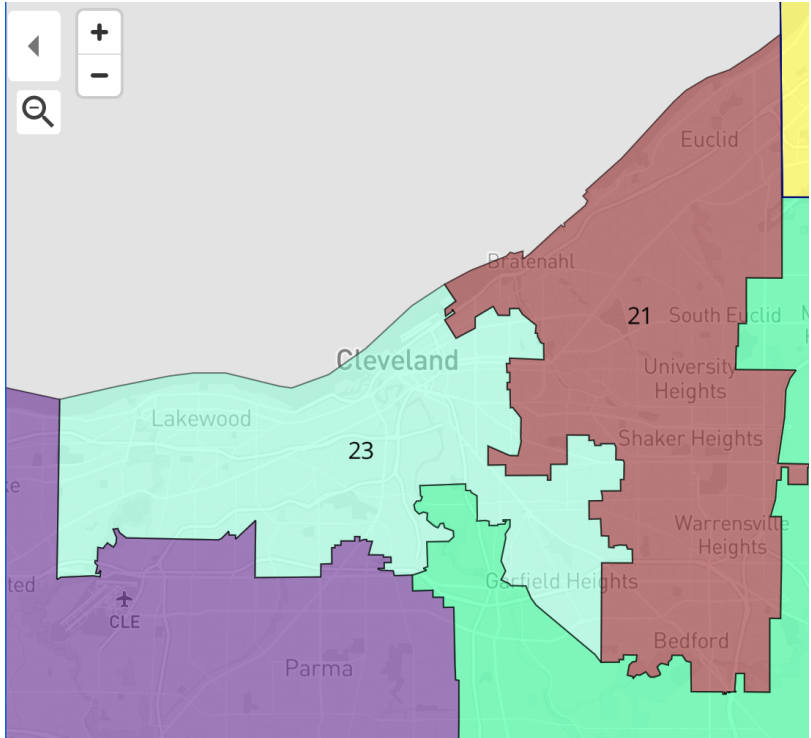
We want districts—and representatives—that reflect our perspectives, lived experiences, and communities. Representatives elected by and for communities will know the problems they face, including shared environmental injustices. When we have districts representative of communities, not partisan interests, our environment and our communities win. Maps like the Ohio Citizens’ Redistricting Commission Unity Maps, which took seriously the constitutional requirements for drawing a map, are what Ohioans deserve.

Thank you for your consideration of this critical perspective in this important process.

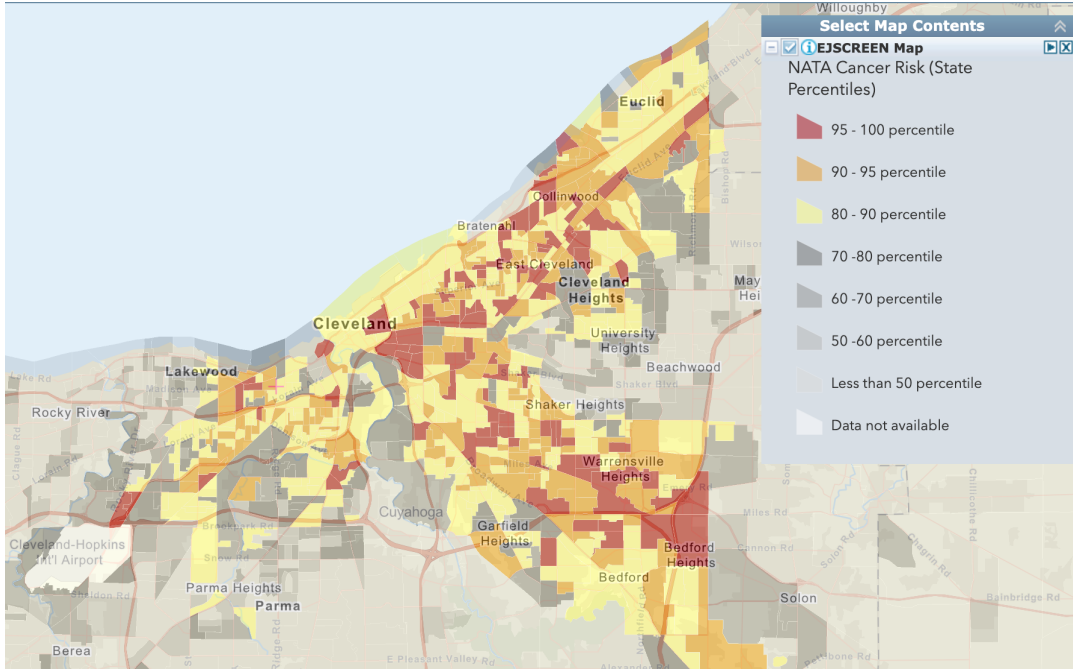


Map 1: Senate President Huffman’s Proposed Ohio House District Map

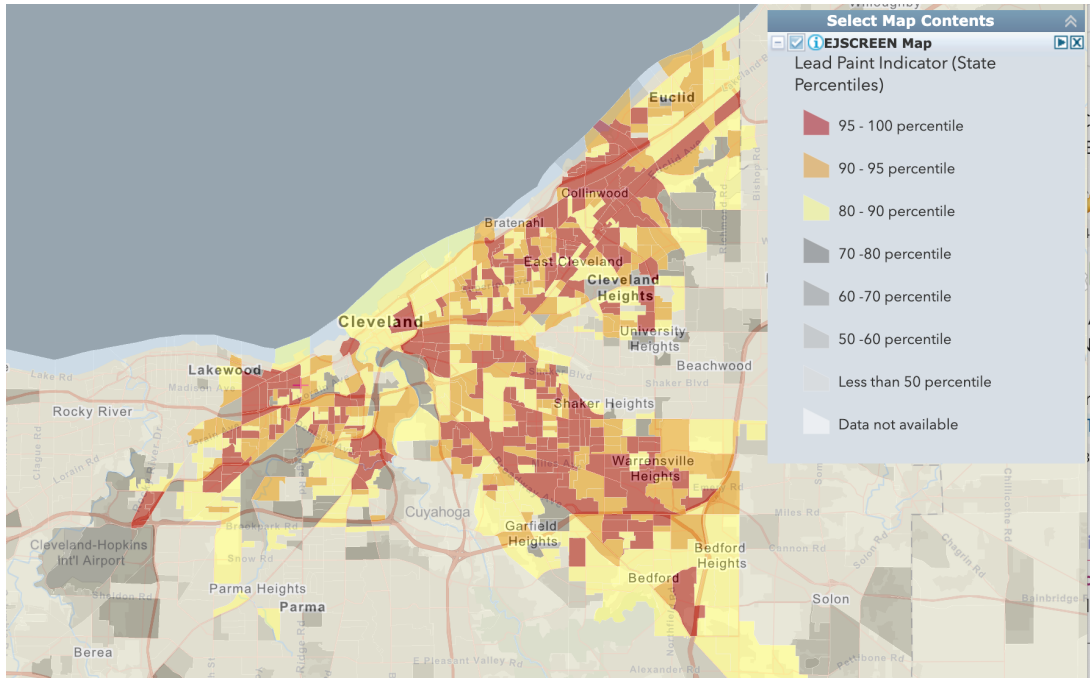
⁷ EJSCREEN: Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool: <https://www.epa.gov/ejscreen>



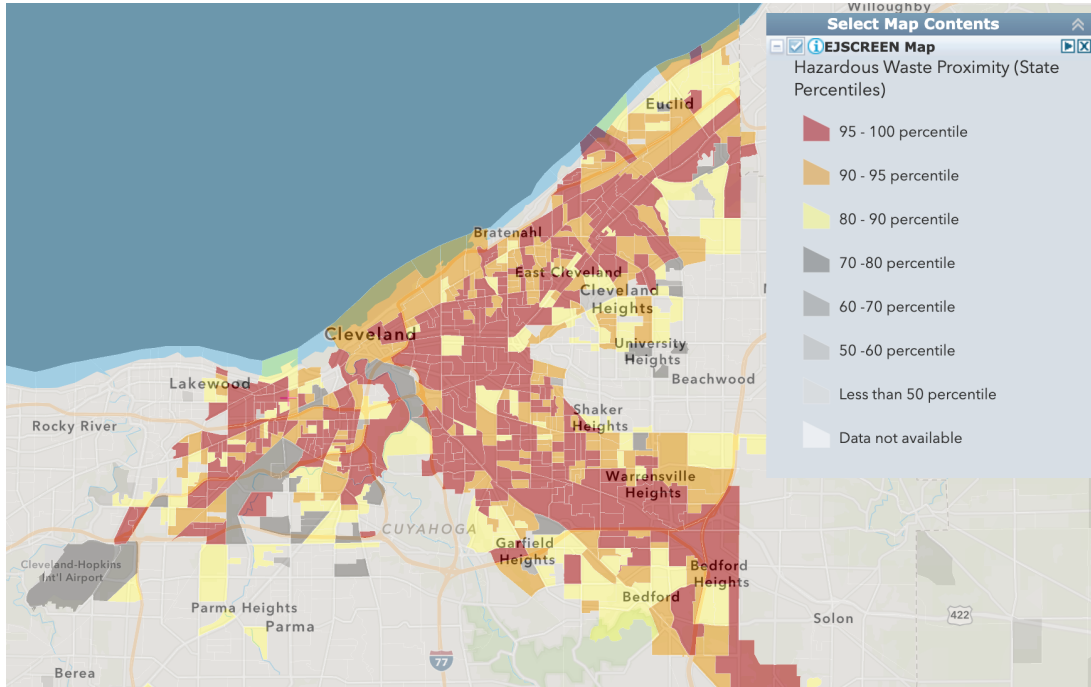
Map 2: Senate President Huffman's Proposed Ohio Senate District Map



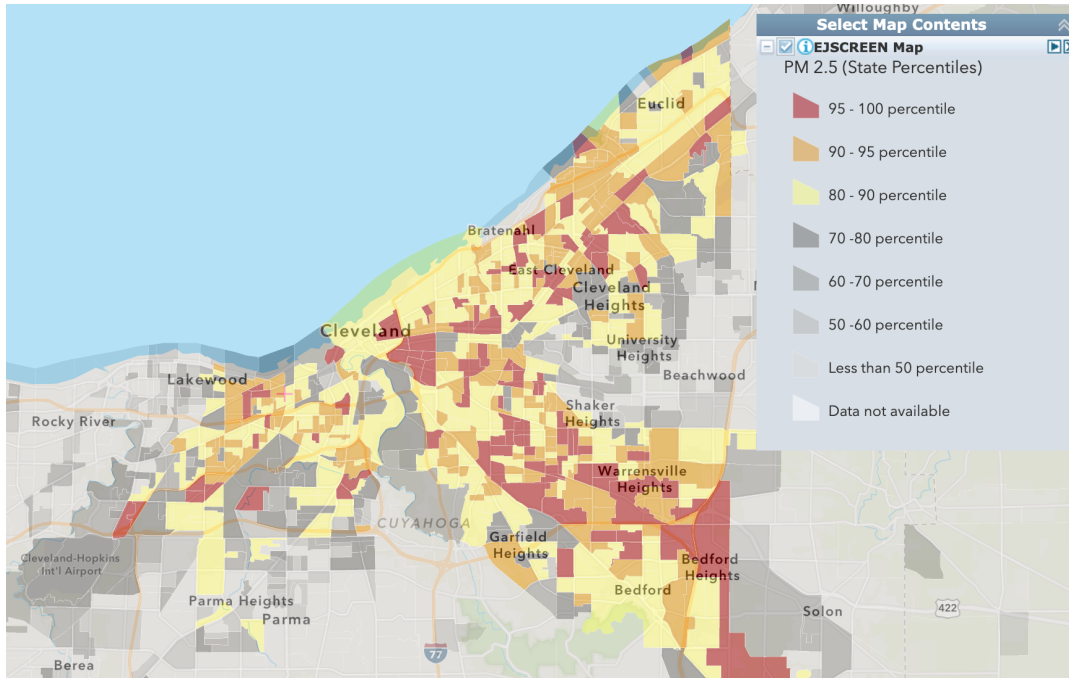
Map 3: EJSCREEN Map indicated National Air Toxics Assessment Cancer Risk (as compared to state) for communities detailed in Map 1.



Map 4: EJSCREEN Map - Lead Paint Indicators (as compared to state) for communities detailed in Map 1.



Map 5: EJSCREEN Map - Hazardous Waste Proximity (as compared to state) for communities detailed in Map 1.



Map 6: EJSCREEN Map - Particulate Matter (PM 2.5) (as compared to state) for communities detailed in Map 1.