

Testimony in support of fair district maps and ending gerrymandering

Members of the Redistricting Commission:

I am a voter from Cleveland Heights and an active participant in the electoral process, having worked as a poll observer. I care deeply about fair maps because I want every voter's voice to be heard. I am horrified by the redistricting maps proposed by the Republican Party of Ohio, which do not attempt representational fairness—they're designed solely to preserve unearned Republican supermajorities in both chambers.

The Ohio Constitution AND federal law require map drawers to consider whether communities of color have adequate and real pathways to political representation. The Republican commissioners admitted publicly at today's hearing that they did not take this into consideration. For example, Cuyahoga County, where I live—a county with a population that is more than 30% Black—would be unlikely to have even one Black state senator under these proposed maps. Furthermore, the proposed maps crack apart communities of interest, dividing neighborhoods and forcing illogical segments of the state together — clearly intending to drown out Democratic votes.

Maps should serve the voters, not the interests of parties or candidates. Our democracy relies on fairness and real representation. When ANY political party manipulates voting maps in order to hold onto power, the people suffer. We must end gerrymandering and create a real democracy where every voter's voice is heard. Ohio voters agree—those of all political persuasions overwhelmingly supported redistricting reforms in 2015 and again in 2018. Both reform efforts won in all 88 Ohio counties and by more than 70% of the vote.

The maps proposed by the Republican Party are unacceptable because they do not offer fair representation as required by the redistricting reforms. I urge the Redistricting Commission to instead adopt one of the maps designed by the redistricting competition winners (Geoff Wise and Pranav Padmanabhan) or by the Citizens Redistricting Commission in order to produce just, fair, and representative district maps so Ohioans will get fair representation.

Katharine Beutner
44118