

Good evening. My name is Melanie Emig and I am a resident of Lakewood, OH.

Thank you to the Ohio Redistricting committee for the opportunity to voice my concerns.

I believe we, as a society, are at a crossroads. In the past ten years I have seen extremist voices amplified. I've seen bullying, violence, and greed normalized and applauded. Extremism has been able to grow because our elections have become less and less about the people's will and more about winning at all costs. We've become an "us vs. them", instead of a "we". Because of gerrymandering, those in power have the ability to go unchecked and unchallenged, and have the ability to ignore many of their constituents' voices. They have no fear of repercussion or not getting reelected, because the system has been built to make them succeed. I believe this polarization is leading us down a path that is destructive to everyone, not just the minority party. I believe the true makeup of Ohio and the average citizen is not extreme but somewhere in the middle. I love my city and this state- I have strong roots here. While I wasn't born here, I have lived here for the past 8 years- I went to school in Ohio I have relatives who grew up in Ohio. It scares me to see this state, following a national trend, become less democratic.

The current ideological composition of Ohio is 55% Republican, but the proposed maps are closer to two-thirds Republican representation. This percentage is even higher than Ohio's 2010 legislative maps, which are considered some of the most gerrymandered in the country. To achieve an even higher percentage on this objectively biased map requires actively serving the majority party over the will of the electorate and is in bad faith. That the majority members of the committee would use their place of power to silence others makes me extremely pessimistic for the future of this state and humanity. I would ask the committee to work harder for all Ohioans who overwhelmingly support fair elections.

I appeal to your oaths as elected officials to please respect the will of your voting citizens. Use the tools readily available that allow creation of maps that are closer to the ideological split of our state. Put forward a map that is closer to our state's true political leanings.

Having diverse opinions and ideas helps our community. Input from everyone, not just one ruling party, only makes the whole state stronger. If we continue to gerrymander this state, more extreme voices will be elevated to a position of power, further polarizing an already polarized community. Again, this hurts everyone in our community. To strip rights and silence Ohioans is against our constitution, against morality, and un-American.

Thank you for your time and attention.