**Ohio Redistricting Commission - 9-13-2021- Cleveland part 2**

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**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:00:00] We like to call the meeting back to order. Call the name, please, of the next witness,.

**Staff** [00:00:08] Diane Morgan. Followed by Katie Paris. Diane Morgan, followed by Katie Paris.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:00:36] Would you state your name and spell it, please?

**Katie Paris** [00:00:39] Sure, my name is Katie Paris. and I'm the founder of Red Wine and Blue, which is a community of thousands of suburban women all across Ohio who want to have our voices heard. I'm also a suburban mom myself, of course, with two young boys here in northeast Ohio. Now, every mom knows how to pick out a bully on the school board in about five seconds. And that's about how long it takes to see what a power grab the Republican proposed maps are. I'm sorry. I got a mom... I'm a mom, I got to call it like it is. The Ohio Constitution requires that our districts are proportional. That means, of course, that their partisan makeup is representative of Ohioans as a whole. You know, one of the reasons I was most excited to move to my husband's home state of Ohio almost a decade ago was because of the political diversity of our state. But our state legislature does not reflect that diversity. The average statewide vote split over the past decade has been about 46 percent Democratic and 54 percent Republican. Yet the officially proposed Republican maps would give Republicans 66 percent. That's two thirds of both House and Senate seats. Since the 2016 election, women across Ohio's suburbs have been increasingly engaged in the civic and political process here. We've been getting informed on the issues finding common cause with women in neighboring communities and even running for office. Still, the number one obstacle to participation is the belief that your vote, that your actions just don't matter. I hear it all the time. Women and highly gerrymandered areas cannot believe that they live in a district, different district from their neighbors down the street. But most importantly, they're demoralized because they understand that even if they organize, even if they convince everyone they know on an issue or for a candidate that they believe in, they can't secure representation that reflects their voice or their values. The officially proposed Republican maps would further disempower voters. Republicans have seen what happens when suburban women organize. So here's what's going on, they're attempting to further divide up suburban areas and dilute our voices. They've also seen what happens when white, black and brown voters in urban and suburban districts unite across our differences. So they're attempting to concentrate minority populations into fewer districts. You see, at the heart of every bully's power grab is fear. They fear what happens when the rest of us have a real voice. So I ask you all the redistricting commission to say no to these proposed maps and say yes to the people of Ohio. Thank you so much for your time. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:04:02] Any questions? Thank you,.

**Staff** [00:04:08] Jacqueline Peck, followed by Peter Petto.

**Jaqueline Peck** [00:04:15] Jacqueline Peck. I live in Kent, that's Ohio Senate District 18 and House District 75 and Congressional District 13. I thank all of you commissioners for this opportunity to speak today. I've edited my comments based on what we've already heard, and I'm focusing on one issue that's actually a process issue. I'm a professor, retired from the University of Akron. I have published research. I have worked editing research for publication. And I have a great concern when district maps are drawn without regard to sound use of data and sound analysis. In the case of drawing these maps, I'm talking about the data of the census community factors and also voting as are, as Chris presented past voting patterns. I was very pleased to see all of that data presented in that map and I will take a much closer look when I get back home and I encourage everyone to do so. I learned a lot through the presentation about the difficulties of mapping and the challenges. And I also thank the Sykes for their map, Sykes and Sykes, and we'll be looking closely at that. So I ask you now, just to be sure, you engage in sound use of data, sound analysis of data, and if the commission needs help, I suggest Katelyn Johnson was it and her firm that does help in analyzing and research data. So we heard it today. I also encourage you all for the benefit of all of us to continue working together and come forward with a map that does honor all voices in the state of Ohio. Thank you for listening. [applause].

**Staff** [00:06:32] Peter PettoNext Witness after Peter Pedowitz, Charlene Pleasant/

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:06:42] Please state and spell your name, please.

**Peter Petto** [00:06:45] My name is Peter Petto,from Bay Village, House District 16, Senate 24. Congressional nine. I'm a retired high school statistics and mathematics teacher. I recently helped the League of Women Voters construct a district map that was submitted to the Cuyahoga County Redistricting Commission and helped several chapters of the league with community maps that were submitted to Fair Districts Gallery and the Ohio Citizens Redistricting Commission. I'm here today to offer analysis of the maps proposed by the commission on September 9th and tell you that these maps should not be the maps chosen for Ohio. On August 23rd, I testified in Cleveland before this commission on several topics, including my community, the Westshore Suburbs of Cleveland. It comprised Bay Village, Rocky River, Fairview Park, West Lake and North Olmstead. At that time, I made this plea, please don't break up our community. On September 9th, the majority party's map maker, Mr. DiRossi, began his testimony with praise for all the citizens who had testified at the statewide commission hearings. However, I see no evidence in the maps he produced that he took any of that testimony into consideration. My Westshore Community, with a total population of 122,879 could have remained intact as a house district that is within the target range. Instead, it was split into three House districts. Suburban Rocky River was combiuned with Lakewood and a swath of Cleveland that extends nearly to University Circle, far beyond downtown. Similarly, suburban Fairview Park was combined with another swath of Cleveland that snakes eastward across urban Cleveland to the other side of town, past E. 80th Street. I've attached maps of those to my written testimony. The other four community maps that I helped construct were similarly fractured. Mr. DiRossi also began by talking about how a regular man, many, many municipal boundaries are and to talk about rivers and gave illustrations about Columbus and elsewhere. I think it's instructive to look at one place where those constraints are substantially eliminated within a big city, the city of Cleveland. Cleveland has a population of three hundred and seventy two thousand six hundred and twenty four, and that comprises three point one two ratios of representation. It must be split and mathematically could be split into exactly three House districts combined into one Senate district, all weighing in at four percent above Target. What happened in Cleveland was in the proposed house may have split not three ways, not four ways, not five ways, but eight ways. And only one of those districts was entirely within Cleveland. Look at the map of the districts I provide to you and you will see the dark shadow of 2011, at least three snake shaped districts, many broken neighborhoods. In hearing...In that hearing, Mr. DiRossi said his maps comply with all the constitutional requirements over and over again whenever he was asked about Section 6. A listener to those hearings might think that he meant that these maps satisfy every constitutional instruction. That's not what Mr. DiRossi appears to have meant. I think that what he meant was that the maps satisfy Section 3, the section labeled requirements for drawing Senate districts or Senate and House districts. His testimony made clear that they don't satisfy Section 6, additional district standards, when he asserted repeatedly that he did not consider partisan preference. He also claimed that he did not consider demographics, which speaks to the Voting Rights Act under federal law. Many maps that satisfy Section 3 constitutional requirements have been submitted to this commission. More than a few do better than the commission map, with respect to other constitutional directives. I believe that for the commission to fulfill its Section six duty, you need to score each and every one of those maps partisan composition and compactness, and then choose the map among those that best meets these targets. The other thing that you must do is a is attempt, or you must attempt to do is to determine whether a map was drawn primarily to favor or disfavor political party. At a minimum, you must ask mapmaker's about their mapmaking procedure. I have about a minute more. Would you allow me to finish that?

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:11:22] OK, please. Please.

**Peter Petto** [00:11:25] If there mapmaking procedure was automated, they should disclose the algorithms that were. Used and you should apply statistical methods that can show impermissible political gerrymandering. If I told you that I didn't use the partisan data to draw a plan, I think that's unpersuasive. Everybody knows the Democrats are clustered in high population and urban areas. It's easy to draw a map that favors one party without using specific data. When I was young, my parents had a lot of requirements and many standards for my conduct. It was not it was not unusual for me to say I heard you, and they would reply, but were you listening? I hope you heard and listen to these thoughts that you will take them into consideration as you do the right thing. Thanks for your time and happy to answer any questions.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:12:16] Are there any questions? Thank you. Thank you.

**Staff** [00:12:23] The next witness is Charlene Postle, followed by Norma Robbins.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:12:39] The next witness.

**Staff** [00:12:42] The next two witnesses are Judith Saltzman, followed by Sarah Sarasin.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:12:59] Next witness.

**Staff** [00:13:02] The next witness is Juliet Sweeney, followed by Daniel Sweeney.

**Daniel Sweeney** [00:13:19] Good evening.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:13:20] State your name and spell it, please,

**Daniel Sweeney** [00:13:22] Daniel Sweeney, M.D., I'm from Bay Village, Ohio. First of all, I'm glad to be able to speak here this evening. I think you need to hear from another Sweeney if you come to Cleveland, Ohio. I am a recently retired family physician. And as such, one of the things I'd like the co-chairs to do is to make sure their commission members, where their mask, when they're in these meetings. [applause] Every other every. I have been wearing a mask throughout the hours we've been here, and I wish that all the commission pictures were doing the same until they had to speak like I'm speaking now. So that's my my off the cuff comment. I have a long political ties with Ohio. My grandfather was the honorable Martin L. Sweeney, congressman from Cleveland, from 1932 to 1942 during the New Deal Era. My father was honorable Robert E. Sweeney, who was a congressman at large from 1964 to 66 during the Great Society Congress, and he also was County Commissioner of County Cuyahoga County from 72 to 1976 and a good friend of George Voinovich and Taft, even though he was a Democrat and they were Republicans. Because of such lineage, I have strong interests in our political landscape in Ohio. I consider myself a progressive, independent and speak here as an Ohio citizen. I am markedly disappointed and actually appalled at the map that was put forward by the majority of this commission. I'm concerned about the state as a whole and not just about northeast Ohio. I did some simple calculations and this not based on maps. Tthe state of Ohio as of the 2020 census has 11,689,100 citizens. I then looked at the top seventeen counties, which are mostly urban and suburban, with the highest population. Those populations were 7,332,229. The other seventy seven counties were predominantly rural and their population was 4,467,219. If you look at the divide between the rural counties, which most often are Republican or lean Republican and the Democratic urban or suburban ones that most often are leaning Democrat, sixty two percent are with the seventeen counties of urban and suburban and thirty eight percent was with the other seventy seven counties. Since most of the counties swing Republican, since mostly rural counties swing Republican and most urban and suburban are now swinging Democrat, the current commission maps at sixty five percent Republican and thirty five to forty five percent Democratic reversed this number. And it ignores the reality of 2020 census of the state of Ohio and population shifts. If the commission... If the commission wants to file the 2015 and 2018 Ohio Constitution and these simple calculations there may have to reflect somewhere between fifty five and 60 percent Democratic leaning and only forty five, forty to forty five percent Republican leaning based on the demographics. The other important thing that's been spoken about here is how this affects the minority population. Twenty one percent of which in a state of Ohio is 2,578,791. The vast majority of these live in urban areas or suburban areas. The commission's maps ignoring the 2020 data is in effect disenfranchizing millions of the minority community in Ohio. These maps should not be adopted by the commission and, if adopted, are in violation of Ohio constitutional amendments. And their various other...they will disenfranchize is myself as Ohio citizen

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:17:48] Are there any questions? Thank you. Next witness.

**Staff** [00:17:55] Paul Simon Norske, followed by Rob Thompson.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:18:11] State your name and spell it, please.

**Rob Thompson** [00:18:13] Good afternoon, I'm Rob Thompson.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:18:15] Thank you.

**Rob Thompson** [00:18:18] I listen to the online testimony of the commission members on nine September when your map was introduced. Most commission members admitted that the map was a work in progress and promised to work in a bipartisan manner over the weekend to improve the map. Have changes been made to the map? If so, why hasn't the new map in progress been published? Seeing your work as essential for public input. The Ohio Constitution requires a map that be accompanied by a statement explaining what the commission determined to be the statewide preference of the voters of Ohio based on election results during the last ten years. Where is that statement and what is the preference ratio for Republican and Democrat that you used in arriving at your map? And any map must be accompanied by a statement that describes how the statewide proportion of districts in the plan corresponds closely to those voter preferences. Where is that statement and how do you show this correspondence? My point is that written statements provide more insight into your thinking than even the maps do. It's too bad that we won't even see these statements until a map is adopted. The proposed statehouse map has little correspondence to voter preferences. Putting aside the competitive districts, the Republican map provides fifty six Republican leaning districts but only twenty two Democratic leaning districts. So you want us to accept the 72 percent Republican weighted map when you have Constitution requires a 55 percent Republican weighted map. If the proposed maps do not fall to our Constitution, then Ohioans reject the maps. The Ohio Constitution states that no General Assembly district plan shall be drawn primarily to favor just a political party. I by myself using only public software to devise maps that were more represented than your maps, even with all your resources available to you. The winners of the Fair Districts Competition and others produced excellent maps, fair, compact and with the intention to nonwhite voters. Ohioans reject the commission's maps and demand much, much better. To be more specific, I looked at your state house map and focused on the five districts in the Toledo area. One of your proposed districts starts in the western suburbs, snakes along the Maumee River and ends in the eastern and northern suburbs, almost a complete circle. Is that what you call compact? Another district is a wonderful example of gerrymandered packing. 75 percent Democrat. My edits preserve communities, give compact shapes and produce fair districts. The Toledo area votes fifty four percent Democrat and 43 percent Republican. And my map has three Democrat leaning districts and two Republican leaning districts. A representative map. I hope you will give my editors and others edits your utmost attention. I have the maps here. The Constitution allows for the Supreme Court to intervene if the statewide proportion of districts in the plan whose voters favor each political party does not correspond closely to the statewide preferences of the voters of Ohio. The proposed maps are in violation. If you want a court fight, you're going to get one. Please avoid a public lengthy court battle that serves no one well. Get to work. Do what Ohioans want, not only what you want. Thank you. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:21:52] Any questions? Thank you. Next witness.

**Staff** [00:21:59] Heather Tuck Makawa, followed by Robin Turner.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:22:17] Please state your name and spell out, please.

**Robin Turner** [00:22:19] Absolutely. Robin Turner. Good evening, Co-chair Sykes, co-chair Cupp and members of the Ohio District Redistricting Commission, thank you for the opportunity to be here today. I'm here today to talk about why their districts are important to my community and why the past 10 years of gerrymandering in Ohio has been so devastating for so many of us in Ohio. Again, my name is Robin Turner. I'm a mother. I'm a community leader and also happen to be formerly incarcerated. I'm from Cleveland, Ohio. And over the past ten years, I have seen my community's political power and ability to influence policies that affect to decline due to unfair maps and rigged rules of the political game. I am very concerned or worried about the safety of my family and myself. There's been an increase in poverty and crime where I'm from, especially violent crimes involving guns. I'm always contemplating moving out of this area. But what would I, what would that solve if I move? I'm not the kind of person who runs from problems that plague the neighborhood I'm from. I want to help find solutions. I work with Ohio Organizing Collaborative and our members organizations in regards to building Freedom Ohio, which builds political power for formerly incarcerated individuals and their families. But the problem is, I don't think many elected officials really know what happens in our neighborhoods. I never see or hear from any of them until it's time for reelection. When it comes to making my community better and making all of Ohio better, the gerrymandered districts we've had for the last decade keeps us from getting that. We are never able to move our agenda forward because we don't have any power to make policy at the state level. We want to build a safer community by ending mass incarceration and investing in our communities. But all too often our voices are unheard. There's a total mistrust of political officials, which is not how democracy is supposed to work. All people in this state, no matter their background or where they live, what color deserve to feel, and be represented by the people we elect. I'm asking the commission to please put party interests aside to make sure that the people in our state have a chance to create solutions and make their communities better. Please follow the spirit and the letter of the reform Ohioans voted for in 2015. We need real representation in this state, which means the number of Democratic and Republican seats in the House and Senate need to mirror how Ohioans actually vote. Roughly forty six percent Democrat and fifty four percent Republican. We live uncertain times. We deserve more certainty that our voices will be heard and our interest represented. Thank you again for the opportunity to be here. This concludes my testimony. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:25:31] Any questions. Thank you.

**Robin Turner** [00:25:36] The next witness,

**Staff** [00:25:38] David Wales, followed by Joshua Walker.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:25:49] Next witness

**Staff** [00:25:50] Maureen Welch, followed by Tessa Yuan.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:26:04] We state and spell your name, please.

**Sue Dyke on behalf of Maureen Welch** [00:26:07] I'm testing on behalf of my friend who can't be here today for medical reasons and she can't testify virtually. So she asked me to read her testimony for her. Her name is Maureen Welch and I am Sue Dyke. And I'm just reading her testimony that she sent me today. There's no way for her to testify, so I just wanted to make sure her voice could be heard.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:26:30] Thank you.

**Sue Dyke on behalf of Maureen Welch** [00:26:31] OK, I'm going to skip the platitudes and I'm just going to go right into it. Maureen Welch is a resident of Guilford Township in Medina County, and I'm presenting testimony on her behalf. Let's see. I have because... She says I have been recently interacting with Medina County citizens about redistricting reform since early 2016, most recently, I've been facilitating groups providing input for community maps in Medina County. I don't think we've talked about Medina at all today. So I just wanted to, I feel like this her testimony should really be paid attention to. Let's see, it was alarming, but very telling to hear that the map makers were instructed by GOP legislative leadership to disregard the Voting Rights Act and proportionality as required in the Ohio State Constitution. It was not surprising that independent mapping experts quickly indicated the map is not competitive and will ensure a Republican stronghold in the Ohio State House, even ensuring that Republicans pick up several more seats. The official working map on these grounds alone is unacceptable to the voters of Ohio, who overwhelmingly supported the 2015 state redistricting reforms. And we demand that you work with the minority members of the Ohio Just Redistricting Commission to develop fair, proportional and competitive legislative maps. I also have concerns related to Medina County. Even though there is no reason to split Medina County on your official map, it is split yet again in a North-South manner. And the western half of Medina County is paired in a district with Ashland and Northwest Holmes County, with Wayne County sitting... Specific conspicuously stetting between Medina and Holmes. This does not benefit Medina voters and does not reflect where they spend most of their time. In 2021 while mapping where Medina County and live workshops spend their leisure time and get their health care, not one person mentioned Ashland or Holmes County as communities of interest or traveling there regularly for services or work. This is yet another attempt to gerrymander Medina voters, placing us at a disadvantage when petitioning our legislative officials, ensuring the continuing problem that voters do not know who the representative and senators are. And even worse, the offices of the representatives and senators are confused by the gerrymandered districts and don't know where their districts are. That confusion is a diversion from public service and takes away from voters trying to work with legislators on issues and concerns. Gerrymandering, which is what you guys have done with with the GOP or Matt Huffman's map, is a way legislators turn their backs on voters and create apathy among the population. And maybe that's what you need to get reelected is voter apathy. That's my comment. Sorry. Sorry, Mosey. I ask you to consider Geoff Wise's Ohio House and Senate maps and these maps, Medina County is whole and paired with Wayne and Western Summit counties, which makes total sense if you're trying to keep community of like interests together. In talking with community members all over Medina County in 2021, people cited strong ties to the Western Summit County for shopping, leisure, health care services and work, as well as residents from southern Medina. People all over the county consistently mentioned easy access to I-76 and 71, and it makes it easy to get to Fairlawn, Akron and Cleveland. They have infrastructure in Medina County as well as environmental and health care concerns, such as there's no hospital that delivers babies in Medina County. Anyway, I'm going to... I'm speeding along here. Ohio voters spoke with their vote in 2015. We do not want to be packed to craft into gerrymandered districts that dilute our votes and make the primaries, the competitive race and the general election a done deal. Even though the gerrymander is hidden in false compactness, Ohio voters expect and are asking the Ohio Redistricting Commission to follow the letter in the spirit of the redistricting reform passed in 2015. We spoke with our votes in 2015 and those votes are clear. We want proportional districts and competitive districts that represent the population of Ohio and do not unfairly benefit one political party over another due to gerrymandering. Draw fair districts and let the chips fall where they may. Medina County wants to remain whole and be placed with communities that reflect where we spend our time and share our values. It is very clear that Geoff Wise's map for the House and Senate meet these standards. Consider these maps as the official working map or I would say now that you presented a Democratic compromise map, perhaps, these are my my comments here that you consider that as you're working map. It's time for the Ohio Redistricting Commission to reevaluate their course of foot dragging apathy and blatant noncompliance with the Ohio Constitution and federal law and pivot to passionate and hearty bipartisan work to do the will of Ohio voters. And in case you're wondering what we mean by hearty bipartisan work and means meet with each other outside of this formal public meeting and hash it out again. Those are my comments very... I continue to be frustrated that no progress has been made since other than what the Democrats, the Senate Democrats have provided today and advancing fair maps and Sen... Secretary LaRose. I would just like to mention it's really not fair for you to ask people what they think about the Democratic Senate maps that were just presented before we showed up in this meeting. How are we supposed to do that?

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:32:23] Please?

**Sue Dyke on behalf of Maureen Welch** [00:32:23] Thank you. Please. Any questions? I don't know if I can answer questions about Medina, but I will try.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:32:31] Secretary LaRose,.

[00:32:32] Thank you co-chair. And yes, ma'am, I understand the frustration. My email address is Frank@OhioSOS.gov so once you do get a chance to look at the Democratic maps, please do let me know. Just so that so that, you know, we are working together as we speak, actually, both Republican and Democratic staffers, while we're busy here, are collaborating and trying to find opportunities for middle ground. The auditor and I met with the Senate Democrats and House Democrats today. So those are the kind of things, and I believe others have as well. So very much a work in progress. My question is about your Medina County comment. So I want to understand correctly what you're saying is that Medina County should be kept whole within one house district. Is that what your testimony was?

**Sue Dyke on behalf of Maureen Welch** [00:33:20] This is Mosey's testimony, Maureen Welch. And I don't see why it needs to be split in half if you're if you're taking pieces from other counties. I mean, just from a logical standpoint. But I would like to just respond also to your comment is that we've been calling your office every week and we speak with Mr. Ward and he's still talking about the census being the reason that nothing's getting done. So maybe you need to advise him differently. And so I just wanted to, you know, again, point that out. In addition, I noticed that you were telling Mr. Conwell to hurry up and get comments to you that he shouldn't write a letter because that's going to take too long. That's not his problem. This is the commission's problem. And as far as we're concerned, I mean, I think I speak for a lot of people in this room who expect you to be meeting with each other outside of sitting behind a table. And it doesn't seem to be happening. I mean, I appreciate the fact that you're talking here and that you're asking questions, but y'all should have been meeting for months now. All right. Maybe even, well, maybe starting in January. I'll give you that. All right. When the new when the new session started. But I mean, that that's no substitute. It's nice, but it's no substitute. You need to be sitting in a conference room talking to each other and hashing it out. And nothing's happened since I testified, what was it, Wednesday or Thursday of last week in in Columbus? So, anyway, that's not Mosey's testimony. That's mine. I'm sorry. But I mean, when you ask questions and you make comments like that, this is this is the way people feel in this room. We're just not being listened to. You hear us, but you don't do anything. I mean, nothing's changed since Wednesday. I've had to prepare multiple testimonies for this. What have you done anyway? So I'm done.

**Secretary of State Frank LaRose** [00:35:22] Mr. Co-chair, a member of my staff was mentioned. I do want to say that that Mr. Ward is a very dedicated and hardworking and valued member of our team. The point that he makes is a valid one about the Census Bureau data being five months late.

**Sue Dyke on behalf of Maureen Welch** [00:35:36] For God sakes, this is a tired argument.

**Secretary of State Frank LaRose** [00:35:37] But it's a fact that that data put us at a great disadvantage. But nonetheless, this is a circumstance we have to deal with. And that's why I've asked if someone does have some constructive feedback. We're up against a deadline of this Wednesday. And so just as a practical matter, the sooner we can hear the better and I really appreciate that.

[00:35:54] We gave you that constructive feedback since March,OK, we have been calling all of your offices since March. This is nothing new. All right. And for you to sit here...

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:36:05] Please, direct, please direct to the chair, please.

**Sue Dyke on behalf of Maureen Welch** [00:36:09] I'm sorry.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:36:09] Yes.

**Sue Dyke on behalf of Maureen Welch** [00:36:10] For us to be treated in a way where we where we are pushed away when we make calls every week, if not more frequently. And we've been bugging everybody to do this. You guys, the Republicans control the process. And you are the reason that this is up... Our backs. All of our backs are up against the wall. You put us here and that's why we're angry. You had plenty of notice. So I don't I don't I apologize for not knowing your your decorum here, but I'm just a regular person who's just very upset that you have put our backs against the wall and your own.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:36:49] Thank you very much.

**Sue Dyke on behalf of Maureen Welch** [00:36:51] Thank you.

**Staff** [00:36:55] Next witness. State Representative Juanita Brent,

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:37:04] Please state your name and spell it. Please.

**Tessa Xuan** [00:37:06] Hello, my name is Tessa Xuan. I believe it's my turn. Good evening. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I am a resident of the Ohio City neighborhood in Cleveland. I serve as the state wide director of OPAL, a statewide grassroots feminist organization that is building power with Asian, Asian-American and Pacific Islander communities across Ohio. I'm here to oppose the acceptance of the proposed Republican voting district maps and instead strongly support fair maps that lead to a robust and participatory democracy in our state. I'm a proud Ohioan. I've lived in Ohio since my family first moved here from Kentucky when I was two years old. And during my lifetime I've lived in seven different counties across the state. The makeup of the current gerrymandered state house does not accurately represent the state that I live in. And as a result, our state house has consistently skewed unfairly toward one political party, focusing its energy on pushing through extreme policies that benefit a select few, rather than feeling the pressure to solve the problems that the majority of us care about. Firstly, I'd like to say that as an Ohioan and as an Asian-American, I'm still feeling quite furious about the HB6 nuclear bribery scandal, which was described as likely the largest bribery money laundering scheme ever perpetrated against the people of the state of Ohio by U.S. Attorney David M. DeVillers. This bribery scandal has put Ohio on the map as having one of the most corrupt state legislatures in the nation. Not only did our lawmakers try to steal $1.3 Bilion from working families across the state, they also stood by and said nothing, basically giving a pass when dark money poured into mailers, going to every single household that engaged in racist, xenophobic, misleading and fear mongering tactics. And these are tactics that have made Ohio a less safe state for people who look like me. This is an age old strategy of demonizing and scapegoating foreign countries and immigrant communities in order to get away with harming predominantly black, brown and poor communities. Gerrymandering is why our officials thought that they would be able to get away with this. Corruption and gerrymandering is why HB six has still not been fully repealed. If the Republican proposed Ohio House map is adopted, then my neighbors across the street from me in Ohio City will live in a completely different district. The line on West 50th Street does not make any sense based on, it's not a natural boundary for our community. The tight knit community that I live in will be split up and our power will be diluted. Representational fairness should also include an effort to draw districts in a way that the voices of minority populations are not drowned out. The current proposed maps from the Republicans does exactly this to Asian and AAPI populations and black and brown communities in Ohio. I am a member of the Asiatown Cleveland Advisory Committee, and the Republican proposed maps draw awkward lines around this white, working class, low income immigrant neighborhood separating Asiatown from black and brown communities that share similar interests and socio economic status to the east of the neighborhood. I also know that Asian and AAPI communities were disappointed this past year and a half to see the state legislature almost completely ignore the resurgence in acts of violence against our communities. We heard from state officials that token representation on a few committees was a substitute for measures of actual substance with actual funding that we knew would keep our communities safe. My fellow OPAL members brought painful stories to our state representatives of being verbally assaulted on the Cleveland RTA, our elders being spit on while walking down the street, our children being called racial slurs while getting ice cream at Graeter's and even one Vietnamese restaurant in Dayton being forced to shut down after being set on fire and spray painted with the words China virus. Even after the mass shootings in Atlanta and Indianapolis targeting Asian and sick American workers, not even a resolution acknowledging these harmful incidents was passed. The statehouse has not been responsive to our needs, and it's clear that it has not been looking out for our interests in any meaningful way. The fact that the members of this commission admitted they did not even consider the importance of racial composition while drawing maps is unacceptable and disrespectful to our communities. I just ask that you please honor and protect our democracy by setting a level playing field and adopting maps that reflect the political and modern racial makeup of Ohio. Thank you so much. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:42:17] Are there any question? Leader, Sykes.

**House Minority Leader Emilia Sykes** [00:42:26] Thank you so much for your testimony today. I really appreciate you you sharing about the AAPI community in northeast Ohio, specifically Cleveland. So you went through very quickly the part of the city where there are new Americans residing. And if you could just be a little bit more specific so as we take your feedback, we can better understand where you want us to to move things.

**Tessa Xuan** [00:42:52] So Asia town is just east of downtown Cleveland. And in both the House and Senate proposed maps from Senator Huffman, there are awkward lines that basically cut off the Asiatown neighborhood from other working class, low income neighborhoods directly surrounding Asiatown. It's I think in this map, it shows it's the very east part of District 13. So it's in the same district as Rocky River, which does not share similar socioeconomic status or similar interests of housing and security, interests of needing more green space in the neighborhoods so that that district line does not make sense. And I I'm on the Asiatown advisory committee. I've worked with the Midtown Cleveland CDC. So it's cutting through Midtown as well.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:43:58] Thank you very much. Thank you.

**Staff** [00:44:03] Next, witness, State Representative Juanita Brant, followed by gelada özlem.

**Rep. Juanita Brent** [00:44:20] Thank you, co-chairs and commissioners. I mean, commission for coming to House District 12. So thank you for coming to my house district. I have a plethora of notes, texts from people who have sent me texts who are sitting at home because we do not honor or not honor, but offer, virtual options. So you will hear me talk about multiple parts of this county. First note that was given to me is that Cleveland needs to have multiple districts in Cuyahoga County that touch Cleveland, but not at the expense of diluting black and brown communities. I would get into the details of that. House District 13, which includes Lakewood, which is on the farthest west side of the county and ends over in the Hough community, which has become the new snake on the lake. If you have looked at Hough,it is a historically black community, and then you look at Lakewood, that is a very progressive community in so many words, but communities that do not tend to mix when it comes to voting habits or demographics at all and is very far in between between each one. And as it is, it is not compact at all. Also, point number three about Solon is split, Solon was one of our cities that has worked really well about where... Is working within our region is no reason that an anchor city like itself is being split within our state. House District 18, which includes Fairview Park, which has an average income of sixty eight thousand dollars, goes all the way, Houses District 18, goes all the way to Ward 5 of Cleveland, which is the poorest part of our state, which is the most concentrated part of of not having wealth. The average income in Cleveland Ward 5 is eleven thousand and that part of the public housing area. So why would we put public housing, which is the average income is eleven thousand with Fairview Park, which is the farthest western part of it, which is also put in House District 18? House twenty one includes Woodmere, which is the only city that is not the part of the Orange School District, that is not in houses... That's being split from that house district. Problem with that, and even if you look at the Orange School District is being split up between two Senate districts and three House districts. It's being split up between House District 21... House district 20-- I mean House District 23, House district 22 and Houses district 21. With all the different school districts is very problematic that we have five cities that are all part of this school district and they are being split up between two different Senate districts in three different House seats. Orange School District has a A rating and the communities are very close over there. People work really well and it's like, why are we splitting them between three points of representation for this House district? House District 18 and house district 20 splits up ward seven, which includes our Asiatown, that also includes Hough, these are communities that are very intertwined with each other. And you also break up part of the Asiatown also. House District 23, which is the joke on the side of Cuyhoga County, is our three ring circus of three different, three different counties being split up. If we were to just decrease the amount of population for each house district, we would not need to have a house district that goes into three different counties for House District 23. The Fairfax community, which is in House District 21 and 20, which is being split, which is a community that is being intentionally split, is the Fairfax and Larchmere community, which is being split up. That's another community that's being split up right now and then very important downtown Cleveland, which is being split up between House District 18 and 13. Our downtown should not be split up between two different House districts. Historically it's all kept as whole. And now you splitting it up into two different districts. And also our Cleveland Clinic area which is very growing, is being split up between House District 20 and House District 13, which is very problematic as we are growing businesses within that area and also when it comes to housing. I'm respectful of time, so I stopped. Did you have any questions?

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:49:02] Any questions? Secretary LaRose.

**Rep. Juanita Brent** [00:49:08] Thank you, Representative, appreciate the detailed look at the at the Cuyahoga County map that you've done there. And I know, as was expressed earlier, that the time to review the proposal from the House and Senate Democrats has only been limited. But if you do get a chance to take a look at that, I'd love to hear your feedback when you get a chance. Please don't hesitate to shoot me an email.

**Rep. Juanita Brent** [00:49:28] I will.

**Secretary of State Frank LaRose** [00:49:28] All right. Thank you, Representative.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:49:30] Thank you very much. Thanks. Next presenter.

**Staff** [00:49:39] The next witness is Jaladah Aslam,

**Jaladah Aslam** [00:49:43] nope, that's not how you say it.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:49:48] Pronounce and please spell your name, please.

**Jaladah Aslam** [00:49:53] Good evening. Thank you chairs. To co-chairs Cupp and Sykes, Governor DeWine, I guess he is still there, Leader Sykes, Secretary LaRose and Auditor Faber. My name is Jaladah Aslam. I live in Austintown Township in Mahoning County and I'm here as president of the Youngstown Warren Black Caucus. I'm not going to go over some of my testimony, as you've already heard, and I think we all know where we're at. The reality is, is that the voters have said twice that we want this thing fixed. The voters have said overwhelmingly, we want this thing fixed. Now, let's be true. Let's be honest. Ohioans don't agree on things like this. We don't agree a 70 and 75 percent of the time of the way something should be done. We've been clear what we want to happen here. And so I hope that the map that was approved strictly on partisan lines by a vote of five to two last week is truly a starting place. It is not where we will end up, because I can tell you there isn't a single person that I've talked to on either side of the aisle in my community that will be happy with those districts. I do want to point out a couple of things to you. First of all, looking at the map that was submitted, my Senate district would really be adversely affected. I live in the 33rd Senate District and the proposal put forth by the majority party added Carroll County to that district. Now, Carroll County and Mahoning County don't have anything in common. OK, not only that, you're taking a city that is a majority minority, Youngstown, and you're packing us with Colombiana and Carroll Counties. Now Columbiana is already part of the district by moving Carroll County into that district. That's still just a way of ensuring more Republican votes and so do the African-Americans and Latinos and Youngstown area will not be adequately represented. That's a problem. That's a major problem. Before I'm asked by the auditor, did I look at the new maps? Yes, they did take Carroll County out of that district. And thank you very much to the Senate and the House Democrats for looking at that. I do want to say something else, I do a lot of work with young people trying to get them engaged in the political process, trying to get them involved in campaigns and the importance of voting. And when people submit, when you guys submit maps that are heavily gerrymandered after the voters have told you that that's not what they want. It really proves to the young people that everything that we tell them is not true, is true. But we tell them, don't worry, the system isn't rigged against you. Don't worry that you're going to be treated fairly. Don't worry. Your voice is going to be heard. Your vote counts. And when they see something like this, then they say, see, what is the point? Why should we get involved? That's not something, that's not a legacy that I want to leave to our next generation. And I don't think any of us here should want them to feel that way. So I'm asking that you as a body, as one commission, instead of looking at just Democratic maps and Republican maps, come up with the map that's fair to all Ohio Ohioans. Submit that to us. And please make sure that it is fair, because I'm telling you now, if it's not fair, you know this is not going to end well. It's not going to end today. There's going to be lawsuits. And there's already talk about another referendum going on the ballot. And the next time we will not be asking elected officials to do this, we will be asking an independent commission, because you will have failed us and failed us miserably. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:53:51] Are there any questions? Thank you very much.

**Jaladah Aslam** [00:53:56] I do have.

**Staff** [00:54:02] The next witness is Jane Jenaveve, followed by Kelly Gauche.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:54:14] Next witness, please,

**Staff** [00:54:16] the next two witnesses are David Goren, followed by Laura Ervin,

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:54:25] would you state and spell your name, please?

**Kelly Goshe** [00:54:28] Hi, my name is Kelly Goshe. It's not at all what it looks like, I know. It's Kelly Goshe. Thank you, all of you, for being here. Members of the commission. Thank you for allowing me to speak today. My name is Kelly Goshe. I reside in Moreland Hills. My kids attend Orange School District. Thank you for the shout out. She's right. I currently reside in Ohio House District 6 and Ohio Senate District 24. Before I start my official testimony, I want to make two points. I'd like to refer to the Ohio Constitution, Article 11, Section 3, subsection A, which is about the requirements for drawing House of Representative districts for the General Assembly. It says the whole population of the state, as determined by the federal decennial census or if such is unavailable, such other basis as the General Assembly may direct. So I'm not an attorney. I don't know the Ohio Constitution by heart, but it seems to me that maybe the General Assembly could have gotten the ball rolling a little earlier on this and yes, wouldn't have had perfect numbers, but could have gotten a start. And then and then proceeded further when the census information was available. Also to the question several times about whether people have looked at the the initial Democratic map. I haven't heard any speakers today say that the Democratic map was the end all be all. I haven't heard any speakers say, ignore everything else, just go with that one. It is the Republican map that this commission has so far voted on and put forth to the public. So I think it makes sense that it's the Republican map and the Republican gerrymandering, the Republican packing, the Republican cracking. That is what people have spoken about today. If the commission wants to go back to the initial Democratic map and put forth that as the the working map, by all means, I guarantee you people would have had comments on it. I looked at it briefly. I would have had comments on it as well. So I think that's that's our starting point. Much of my prepared testimony was either highlighted or negated by the amended proposal that was put forth earlier by Senator Sykes and Representative Sykes. I came to highlight the splitting of District 23, the splitting of orange school districts, cities. Thank you, Representative Brent. I appreciate your comments. And also the splitting of the city of Solon, which makes no sense whatsoever. I live very close to Som Center Road and under the proposed maps, if you travel Som Center Road from the top of Solon into the bottom of Solon, which is only five miles, you would go back and forth between districts six times. That seems a little crazy to me. Instead, I was going to recommend Mr. GEoff Wise's submitted maps, which keeps the city of Solon intact in my district, but apparently split cities in others. I admit, I have three children, three young children. I had to bribe them with a lot of candy just so I could sit and look at the maps in my district. So I apologize if I didn't closely examine other districts. Without having looked at it closely, it does appear that the proposed amended map we just heard about closely abides with the Ohio Constitution. Thank you again, Representative Sykes and Senator Sykes, and to the gentleman who explained that information, I hope this committee is sincere in its gratitude for their good faith, effort, effort. I hope you will vote on that amended map now today and maybe take that up as your new working map. When I spoke to this commission in Akron, I highlighted the importance of competition in our districts. No, not all districts have to be competitive, and that is not a requirement outlined in the Constitution, but surely having more competitive districts as allowed for in the Sykes's amended proposal. More competition is better. Competition spurs innovation, competition spurs growth. Ohio and its economy needs more of that. I hope the commission, will finish up quickly, but would they allow me to proceed

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:58:54] Are there any questions?

**Kelly Goshe** [00:58:57] No I reached my time limit. May I please continue?

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:59:02] You can take one minute, please.

**Kelly Goshe** [00:59:04] I will do my very best. Secretary LaRose, I really appreciated your comments earlier about moving forward in a bipartisan process. I sincerely hope you mean it. I understand your frustration with the cynicism and and disappointment and pessimism that some speakers have expressed today, but I also hope you will understand that when we have been disappointed and blatantly ignored again and again and again, it's hard to have faith that others are working in good faith. Again. Secretary LaRose, and unfortunately, the governor has left, but I address my comments to them because I'm just more familiar with their speeches. And so it's not a slight to the rest of the commission. But I think like many of the citizens sitting here today and in the overflow rooms above will be registering as Republicans in the 2022 primary. I disagree with you and the governor a lot, but in my heart of hearts, I really believe that you have the best interest of Ohioans and that you want to do what is best for our state. And so I will vote for you in that primary. I just urge you to do the right thing. You have seen the extremism, you have seen the vision. You know that this map, the currently proposed map, is not what is right for Ohio. It's not what's right for our citizens. It's not what's right for our economy, because this division and the extremism is killing us. We've got to get back to common sense. We've got to get back to balance. Please do the right thing. Thank you. Thank you for allowing me to go over. I appreciate it.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:00:56] Next witness. Briefly, Secretary LaRose.

**Kelly Goshe** [01:01:05] Thank you, ma'am. I'm a parent of three as well, and I want to make my daughters proud. So we're going to work as best we can to get to that compromise. Thank you.

**David Guram** [01:01:16] Hello, my name is David Guram. I'm from Akron. I encourage this committee to vote no or against the Republican map submitted on Thursday, September 9th. That day that the map was was submitted, you voted quickly to vote for it. Today, there was an amended map that was offered. But today you did take a vote on that amendment. I encourage you to vote for that map, because actually it's moving towards a much better map. Why don't you do that today so we know where the direction of this committee is going? So we are still under the Republican map. We'll be under Republican map, the maintains and increases the strength, the stranglehold of the power of the Republicans on the citizens of Ohio. Under the super majority rule by Republicans has led to one of the largest political corporate scandals that was allegedly commissioned by Representative Larry Householder and his friends. Besides taking a bribe from FirstEnergy, Householder raised large amounts of campaign contributions that Larry distributed to other Republicans. Then the votes of those, of these Republicans was purchased to passed HB 6. Even now we are we are still paying for two coal fired plants in Indiana and... The efficiency programs. And the alternative non fossil fuel power projects have been scrapped and are still eliminated. The practice of accumulating campaign donations and then distributing that money to other candidates who will be beholden to those politicians is still occurring. That is actually what was done by Huffman in 2018 and by Cupp in 2020. If you look at ballot Expedia, you'll see their financial records. Of of course the, of course the Republican plan is to have a four year map. Mr. LaRose, this is the reality. It's time to start continuing your fantasy of optimism. Are all five Republicans going to be complicit with the boys from Lima, Huffman and Cupp? Only when Amy Acton to was the head of the State Department of Health. DeWine actually seemed to be a leader. However, now that that however, we know now that DeWine's inability to to change the gun laws as they promised after mass shooting. [applause] Still, he is still not fulfilled that promise. He signed a law, a Stand Your Ground law that puts a target on black and brown people and people like me who stand up and speak out. And people should know that there is a woman that is running as a Democrat for governor and a woman that's running as a Democrat for secretary of state. That much better--

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:04:53] If I could interrupt you. Just speak to the maps please.

**David Guram** [01:04:58] I'm speaking to the maps.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:04:59] We have a lot, we need to be courteous. There's forty one more people to--

**David Guram** [01:05:06] But not being courteous by what what's being done by the by the Republicans. So--.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:05:11] We're here to talk about the map. So please curtail your comments to the map.

**David Guram** [01:05:15] In conclusion, it's time to trash the September 9th map. Vote on the amended map as was presented tonight. Tonight. Thank you.

**Laura Irvin** [01:05:43] My name is Laura Irvan, and I'm here testifying against the gerrymandered Republican drawn state House map. I want to thank you all for showing up today to hear the testimony of your constituents. I'm from Lorain County. I'll tell you a little bit about what's going on in Lorian County. In ten of the last 11 or more presidential elections, voters in our county have voted for the Democratic candidate. We are a Democratic county. In Lorain County, we have seven countywide elected officials who are Democrats and we have four countywide elected officials who are Republicans, one of which is a coroner. Until the last election, all county wide elected were Democrats. I'm sure you've heard about the shenanigans that have been going on between the two newly elected Republican commissioners, hiring lovers, firing lovers, hiring campaign managers, firing campaign managers, hiring campaign donors, firing campaign donors, hiring people who are unqualified, firing some of those people. One Republican commissioner telling the other to resign. The list of their scandals goes on as a soap opera. Needless to say, not a whole lot is getting done in Lorain County because of the two Republican commissioners and their foolishness. These are the same ilk as the Republicans in Columbus who cheat us out of tens of millions of dollars through FirstEnergy dark money, backroom dealing and school vouchers to ECOT. I digress to point out that when Republicans are in charge, when they have a supermajority, they cheat, they cost us money, they cost us lives, and I'm sick of it. This is exactly what you're doing with the drawing of these maps. The way the Republicans have drawn Lorain County is a perfect example of gerrymandering and cheating. Putting Lorain City and Elyria in the same district is a textbook example of packing a district. You have packed the Democratic and minority votes. The spirit and the intent of the voters was to end gerrymandering. We want competitive districts. We want districts that reflect our community. We want districts that reflect our voting patterns. We should have at least two competitive districts, if not three, in Lorain County. You have drawn zero competitive districts in Lorain. For House district 53, you have drawn Vermillion in the same district as Willard. Tell me what connection the people in Vermillion on Lake Erie have to do with the farmers in Willard. Vermillion's revenue is from tourism. Vermillion's businesses are in the boating industry, but the focus on boat repair, boat sails, marinas, fishing charters, docks and boat storage. Willard is a small rural farming community. What do the people of Oberlin, who worked for one of the most prestigious colleges in the country that's known for the Allen Art Museum and the Music Conservatory, have in common with the farmers in Huron, which, by the way, is Ohio's number one county in producing vegetables? We're not talking apples and oranges here. We're talking tractors and soybeans versus Mozart and museum tours. Both are good, but they don't go together. They shouldn't be represented by one committee...They should be they should not be represented as one community because they are not one community. Oberlin should be represented by the same person who represents Lorain County Community College and Elyria. Oberlin is eight miles from Elyria. Oberlin is forty six miles from Willard. I would add that our stage is a purple state, not a red state. The only reason people think we are Republican state is because our state legislature is so gerrymandered. We should have at least forty four House, Democratic House seats and at least fifteen Democratic Senate seats. Aren't you tired of the extremists in your party dictating how you can vote? Don't you want to win fair and square? Don't you feel dirty when you cheat? [applause] What do we have to do to make you want to be fair, we voted for a fair process, we voted for a fair map, and that's what we deserve. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:10:59] Next witness please.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:11:02] Randall Nichols, Randall Nichols.

**Randall Nichols** [01:11:15] My name is Randall Nichols and I would like to ask the commissioners to turn their devices away. Turn your phones over, please. I'd like to have your attention. Thank you. You've got a room full of presenters who are compassionate and knowledgeable and very technical, and your maps just dismiss all that and so that the technical side of it is pretty obvious they know more than you do. And yet you will go away from here and gerrymander some more. It's a given. It's your history. Even Democrats, it's a it's your history to gerrymander for political advantage, not for fairness or equity. And so what I want to do is not address the technical, but more of the moral. In just a couple of minutes, I'll bet a dollar which is lying in front of Bob Cupp, that whatever you present goes to court. It will be illegal, it will be unconstitutional, and they'll be a big fight. So you're going to ignore almost all of what you just heard. And there is a dollar. My name is Randall Nichols. You can get in touch with me if you'd like. What you want to do is preserve your power, your money and your egos. Politicians, you know, many of them are psychotic. That's been proven. And you want to preserve the ego that power you get from being in charge of things. You love it. And that's what you want to keep more than you want to keep equality or fairness. And one of the things I know for certain is that the Republicans take their commands from bowed down to really believe in Trump, who steals from kids charities, calls people motherfuckers, lies every time he opens his mouth, calls women skanks and pussies. And that's the guy you look up to. [gavel]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:13:44] Please, please, please.

**Randall Nichols** [01:13:45] I'm just repeating Trump's words.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:13:47] We don't have to repeat those words.

[01:13:50] I just I'm quoting our president, our former president. What you are doing with this kind of an idea, among many others, like the ECOT scam you helped perpetuate. What you're doing is killing Ohio. You're killing democracy. You are miscreants. And you are immoral. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:14:17] The next witness please

**Staff** [01:14:21] the next witness is Sherry Abramski. Followed by Mary Kelsey.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:14:39] The state and spell your name, please.

**Sheri Obrenski** [01:14:42] My name is Sheri Obrenski I'm the president of the Cleveland Teachers Union and a voter in House District 60 and Senate District 25. Good evening, co-chair Cupp, co-chair Sykes, and members of the commission that are still sitting at the table. I testified in Cleveland, along with dozens of other concerned citizens, regarding the importance of a truly fair and democratic redistricting process. To Auditor Faber, who has left the room, Senator Sykes and Leader Sykes, it is nice to see you again. It is unfortunate that the other members of the commission were unable to make their in-person attendance at the last round of hearings a priority. There were many people that change their schedules to attend those hearings, though they were clearly inconvenient for both the commission and the citizens alike. The maps that the commission voted to adopt for formal introduction within just a few hours of their presentation last week demonstrate that we were not heard during those hearings, but rather that the majority party has chosen to cling to a system that the voters of Ohio have overwhelmingly rejected. I also served on the Fair Districts Mapping Competition Advisory Committee. As has been pointed out by previous speakers, these maps were created by private citizens who attempted to do what should have been done by this commission, which has put forward a map that is fair to the citizens of Ohio. While I understand that those maps are not perfect, I dare say they were created with more intention to meet the spirit of the Ohio Constitution than that which is currently been introduced. The voice of the people cannot be allowed to fall on deaf ears, which is precisely what has occurred over the last ten years in our gerrymandered state. You have a legal, ethical and moral responsibility to do the right thing. Secretary LaRose, I wish that I shared your optimism, but when your voice is repeatedly ignored, optimism is difficult. When the families that you serve are continually marginalized by their state legislature, it's hard to have faith. When the members that you serve are routinely derided by so many of their elected officials, trust is tough. Subverting the voice of the people by packing and cracking districts, which is what the proposed maps do, is shameful. Once again, black and brown people are ignored or worse, minimized and competitive districts are scorned. Upholding the status quo will result in more of the same. A General Assembly that focuses, focuses on the red meat of the base, produces low quality and too often unopposed and sometimes corrupt candidates, and often fails to serve in the best interests of all of the people of Ohio. If you are truly here to serve the people and desire the voters to fully participate in our democracy, you will discard the hyper partisan map you have introduced and instead look to those examples that would promote competitive districts and more fairly represent the voters that they are supposed to serve. Thank you.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:18:07] Thank you. [applause] Are there any questions? Next witness.

**Staff** [01:18:14] The next witness is Mary Kelsi, followed by Pam Marcio via Virginia Weiss.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:18:34] Next witness.

**Staff** [01:18:41] The next witness is Anastasia Panchos, followed by James Trutko.

**Virginia Weiss on behalf of Pam Mascio** [01:18:59] yeah she said, my name [inaudible]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:19:07] State and spell your name, please.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:19:11] Good evening, late evening. My name is Virginia Weiss, I'm presenting today... Pam Mascio, a colleague of mine. We work for a fair voting in Cleveland. We work together closely as one of the things we do. And so I've offered since she's unable to be here to read her testimony. And I appreciate you being here. And I also appreciate the members on this commission who chose to put their masks on. I noticed that for this portion they were not on. And as our covid numbers are skyrocketing yet again and we're going into the winter, I'm getting really nervous as I know a lot of Ohioans are. So I do appreciate you putting masks on. Thank you. I feel more comfortable. Good evening. My thanks to Co-Chair Sykes and Co-Chair Cupp and the rest of the commission for hearing my comments on the proposed maps today. Her name is Pamela Mascio and she lives in Aurora in Ohio Senate District 18 and Ohio House District 76. And I'll read in her voice. I testified at the first public hearing in Cleveland, but I could not be here today because with such short notice, she was unable to reschedule another meeting. I read this morning that out of the million dollars plus budgeted for redistricting, only 173,000 dollars had been spent and of that, majority party has spent only 42,380 dollars. And that comes through loud and clear in these abysmal maps presented last week. You didn't even think it necessary to hire any outside consultants, but rather used Republican staff members, the same exact people who gerrymandered these maps in 2011 and gave Ohio the distinction, this state that I like to be proud of, which I'm not anymore, of being the fourth most gerrymandered state in the country. You've heard by now loud and clear that Ohioans believe these maps presented are unlawful, unconstitutional, and they're not executed with a shred of good faith. Many Republicans call themselves people of faith. Like the children that we try to teach, I feel the same way. I don't believe it anymore. The maps are more gerrymandered than what we have now, but you know that. The maps ignore representational fairness, but you know that. The maps ignore the requirements of the Voting Rights Act. But you know, that, too. It is appalling, that you would ignore two constitutional standards that require you to attempt in good faith to draw lines that do not favor one party over the other and are drawn so that districts, represent statewide voting preferences. I think it's safe to say that anyone who has the most minimal knowledge of these matters knows that the voting preference of Ohioans over the past 10 years is not 67 percent Republican. In fact, you'd have to go more back more than 100 years to find a presidential election where 67 percent of Ohio voted Republican. From the big picture down to the community level, these maps are unacceptable. Consider what you've done to Aurora. Currently, her house district includes other similar suburban communities like Bainbridge and Chesterland. The proposed map for Aurora has been cut away from those communities and becoming part of a district that includes rural Trumbull County and Warren. This is not our community. Three exclamation points. We are a bedroom suburb of Cleveland and are just 10 minutes away from Chagrin Falls. I don't know that I've ever even been to Warren, but suffice it to say, their needs and concerns don't remotely mirror ours. Furthermore, Aurora is a growing area and is trending toward more competitiveness. That trend will most likely certainly be completely obliterated in our newly proposed district. Lumping Aurora in with Warren is just patently absurd. We all know and that good and fair maps can be drawn. Community map making competitions have resulted in numerous maps, all superior to what we'v, what you've proposed. When compared using the standard metrics, these maps fulfill all the requirements of the reforms with no partisan gerrymandering and more competitive districts. Have you guys looked at them? How and when are you planning on making modification to these proposed maps? Will there be bipartisan negotiation? Will these meetings be transparent? I am embarrassed for you and I hate to read this, but the majority party, I'm embarrassed for you to you have made a mockery of the redistricting process so far. I cringed when I heard you debating the meaning of the words shall attempt. Never in my wildest imagination would I have thought that you would try to weasel out of what is obviously intended and the reforms by debating, debating common legal phraseology. How you have conducted - I'm almost done, I promise. How you have conducted yourselves throughout the past month flies in the face of the will of all Ohioans. You took an oath to support the Ohio Constitution and to impartially perform all the duties incumbent upon you. But it's obvious your singular goal of maintaining supermajority power by continuing to rig the vote supersedes that oath. This will not be over on Wednesday. If we do not get fair maps in accordance with constitutional reforms, we will continue to fight and we will exercise every option available to force you to do your jobs for which you were elected. And I ask just personally that in good faith, check your oath.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:25:07] Thank you. Thank you. Next witness. Spell your name, please.

**Anastasia Pantsios** [01:25:19] Hello, my name is Anastasia Panchos, I live in Cleveland Heights, I am in House District 9, that's Janine Boyd and I am in Senate District 21, Sandra Williams. I come from a family of activists. My mother was actually the president of the Chicago Legion...League of Women Voters in the 70s. But I was not politically active at all, being more of an arts person until 2000, when the stopping of the counting the presidential votes in Florida made me aware that I needed to get out there and do something. And since then, fair elections has been my number one issue. So naturally, I was involved in the efforts to pass redistricting reform in Ohio in 2015 and 2018. Some of you may recall that there were people who were pushing at the time for a bipartisan or nonpartisan commission to do the the redistricting. Actually, that was pushed earlier. I think there were some measures on the ballot that failed in 2012, but there were a lot of people who said, well, OK, this isn't ideal, but there's a lot of guardrails in place. And there's all these rules they have to follow. So it'll be good even though we don't have the bipartisan commission. And I have to say, I was one of those people. I thought, OK, you know, we have these rules, they're in the Constitution. This is the law they have to follow it. It's very disappointing to me to see that the Democrats released a map on August 31st. Nine days later, the Republicans released a map that was entirely created by Republicans. And the understanding, and I think most of us believed that the any maps proposed were supposed to be created together and were supposed to be created with a transparent process instead of, oh, here's our map. Here's your map. For the Republicans to come out with a map as a starting point that is actually worse than the current map feels like giving the finger to the voters that worked so hard to pass this redistricting reform. [applause] Currently we have sixty four, thirty five breakdown in the House. And to be fair to the voters, it should be fifty five, forty four. In the Senate, twenty five, eight. It should be about 19-14. I mean, obviously those aren't, you know, specific figures, but you know, you want competitive districts and you want a little bit of swing there. These maps have just been released haphazard without the public having a chance to look at them. I shoot at festivals for my publication and I shot four festivals over the weekend and have 1500 photos I should be editing at home. So, no, I haven't had a chance to look at the map, but I've read a lot about what people have said. People want a bipartisan, transparent process and I hope that's what you'll give them, because if you don't, the state is going to go nowhere good. Thank you so much.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:28:52] Thank you. [applause] Next witness.

**Staff** [01:28:58] James Trutko.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:29:02] State and spell your name, please,

**James Trutko** [01:29:06] Sure, my name is James Trutko. I'm a resident of Rocky River in Cuyahoga County. I'm a Republican, but I'm here speaking on my own behalf today. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to you today. For years, Democrats and liberal supporter groups have complained about gerrymandered legislative districts. Blaming the dead... Legislative district boundaries for their failure is really a result of failing to win elections. And insulting the representatives here today is a mark of that frustration. Let's remember today that the new fair redistricting process became a law under a Republican governor and Republican controlled legislature. The new process was not the result of efforts by different voter rights groups to end the gerrymander. We now have a fair and bipartisan, but difficult, process for drawing legislative districts. This process was validated by an overwhelming majority of Ohio voters in 2015, and they when they approved this change. We should all take a moment to pause and think about the practical implications of redistricting and redrawing lines. The basic problem is that Democrats are concentrated in predominately urban areas and Republicans are spread out. This makes it very difficult to draw what everybody sees as fair districts. I should mention and compliment a number of people that have given presentations. The process of drawing these legislative boundaries is very... Is a very difficult one that involves many criteria, several of which are conflicting. I think fairness and the idea of... People's perception of fairness and what is gerrymandering really depends on the eye of the beholder. When I look at your results in Cuyahoga County, I see that you... Represent... Districts 13 and 18, in my opinion, could be improved. It's in the interest of the public to have competitive races even when it's difficult to draw districts. The reason we have districts is, it is to be able to hold individual representatives accountable for their actions. When I looked at Dave's Redistricting analysis on the two, the Republican map, and looked at the briefly the Democrat map, it was, it said that the Republican map was twice as competitive. I think this is a good thing for the for the public. I've heard a lot of people talking about how the next election will come out for Republicans and Democrats, but we're voting for individuals, not Republican or House representation in the Ohio House or Senate. Let me ask a question about these partisan forecasts. How will the maps come out for no party voters? In Rocky River, a fairly typical suburb. We have 16,000 voters, about twenty two hundred Republicans, thirty nine hundred Democrats and over 10,000 no party voters. So nearly two thirds of the voters are no party. Whether Democrats or Republicans win our district depends on how the candidates appeal to people without a party ID and how they represent us. Voters have a choice and need to have a choice and a reason to vote with competitive districts. And that's the way it should be. The results in Columbus in the next election will be determined not by a map, but by well, how well the parties appeal to partisan Democrat and Republican voters and to a large degree on how they appeal to the number of people that don't represent or don't pick either party right now. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you. Thank you.

**James Trutko** [01:34:11] Next witness, please.

**Staff** [01:34:13] Delores Gray, followed by Tim Clark.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:34:30] State your name and spell it, please.

**Dolores Gray** [01:34:33] Dolores Gray. Thank you, commission, for allowing me to speak. And I wanted to state a couple of facts which we have stated before. Ohioans sent a clear message to the map drawers. We want fair maps drawn through a transparent redistricting process with lots of opportunity for people to engage on proposed maps. Ohioans demand to give voice to the needs of their communities and future maps. No matter who we are or where we live, all of us deserve a fair shot at real political representation. We all deserve the power to vote politicians out of office that don't serve us well. Unfortunately, most Ohioans haven't had that power for the last decade because of our gerrymandered districts. I come from the heart of the city in Cleveland, Ohio, Hough, Midtown, as well as Asian town. And that's one of the main areas that are suffering from different types of problems that are going on. I am an advocate and leader in the city of Cleveland and I'm working for the betterment of women and children in the community and the surrounding areas. This decision of this proposed maps, in my opinion, is unfair and is a divisive measure to further marginalize a community of people, in my opinion, that's bigoted, racist and ungodly. It will create even more problems. As a resident of Cleveland. I understand what gerrymandering would do to our district, my city, my community, and it's an insult to voters that are looking for help within their communities. We want fair maps with fair districts. I want to make this short, but it's not sweet because this is something that is necessary and things should, you should really take a look at these maps and how it will affect the community. Every day in my community, I work with women and children that are going through serious problems. And this map, it will not help at all. I want to know where are we at that live... We live in these areas. Where do we fit in with this process, with this decision? It sounds like we do not fit in at all. We're being ignored. I ask this question because I feel that the commission doesn't care. It appears to me that they are only concerned with protecting partisan interests only. The commission should be aware of how splitting the maps will affect the residents. Our governments need to be working on helping all citizens, whether you're rich, middle class or poor. I'm going to close this, like I said to me, is not... It's simple and it's not sweet. But we really have to take a look at what's going on in all our communities. I'm a concerned resident. I am a mother. I am a grandmother. And all of my family members live in the heart of the city. And this part, gerrymandering it really needs to stop. All Ohioans should be thriving, not just the wealthy. I urge you to please take consideration regarding the map. And with that said, I want you all to know that everyone in this room and all the ones that was here before, we are a voice. We are not an echo. And we will continue until we get everything together in our communities, whether you, whether you are there or not. Thank you. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:38:50] Next, witness.

**Staff** [01:38:53] Tim Clark, followed by Janice Simmons' Mortimer.

**Tim Clarke** [01:39:14] My name is Tim Clarke. Around August 31, I submitted a General Assembly redistricting proposal to the commission. I had hoped to discuss my proposal last Thursday, but I had a previous commitment which I could not reschedule on one day's notice. When Ohio voters adopted the General Assembly redistricting amendment in 2015, a number of changes were made. Some are technical or procedural in nature, but there was an important linchpin in the new scheme for the first time in the state's history. There was an express obligation to create districts that fairly represented the voters of the state. Specifically, no plan could be drawn primarily to favor or disfavor a political party. And the statewide proportion of districts favoring each political party, sorry, now favoring each political party must correspond closely to the statewide preferences, the voters of Ohio. What the majority of this commission has proposed does not come close to meeting these standards. The Democratic share of the two party vote is approximately 46 percent. To comply with Section (6)(B) would require forty five of ninety nine state House districts and fifteen of thirty three state Senate districts favoring Democrats. Instead, the commission's proposal includes only 32 Democratic leaning House districts and a mere eight Democratic leaning Senate districts. This can only be described as a complete failure to comply with this provision. It is not as if this was necessary. It is possible to draw 45 House districts favoring Democrats. I know. I did it. And it is possible to draw 15 Senate districts favoring Democrats or at least come very close. I know. I did it. The commission's proposal may well meet the technical requirements of Sections 3 and 4, it follows the rules for the number of House and Senate districts and large counties. It does not divide any small county more than once. It does not divide the cities of Lorraine, Parma, Canton, Youngstown or Hamilton. I would expect nothing less. I followed these rules as well. As for other municipalities and townships, the commission's proposal contains the same number of split's is in my proposal. None of this justifies the plain violations of Section 6. Whenever I have spoken to a redistricting panel, I have stressed how fundamental it is to our democracy that if a majority of voters support a particular party in an election, that party should be given the opportunity to govern. After all, in elementary school. One of the first things we are taught about our government is that majority rules. And yet the commission's proposal does all it can to subvert this principle, suggesting that the only majority who should rule is the majority of this commission. My proposal may not be perfect, but if I, working on my own in two and a half weeks can come up with a plan that complies with all of the sections of Article 11 in the spirit in which they were intended, then surely legislative staff with all of their resources and four weeks could do as well or better. The only conclusion is that there was no intention of complying with Section 6. The commission's proposal is an insult to democracy and an insult to those who supported the reform proposal six years ago. I urge this commission to reject this proposal and select another option. Naturally, I would recommend my own. If I am unable to persuade the majority of this commission or some reasonable compromise can be reached, then I would urge the Democratic members of this commission to reject the majority's proposal. After all, it is better to come back and revisit this in 2025 than to lock in a bad map for ten years. I thank the members for their time and attention.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:43:30] We'd like to thank you as well. The next witness,

**Staff** [01:43:36] Janice Simmons' Mortimer, followed by Jessica Eppstein,

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:43:41] Would you state and spell your name, please?

**Janice Simmons-Mortimer** [01:43:43] Sure. Good evening. I'm Janice Simmons Mortimer. I live in Ohio House District 76 and Ohio Senate District 18. If I asked you what did you think of Shalersville, you may have a glassy eyed look to you, maybe you never thought you'd been there, but if you traveled the Ohio Turnpike heading east, you have been. What did you think of Manaway? Again, unless you went to the potato festival recently or were there when they did the world's largest potato pierogi? You probably haven't been to Manaway either. How about Hiram? Well, that one you might know, you know, Hiram College, where James A. Garfield got his start politically and his formative years, which ended up in the presidency. But all three of those communities comprised the Crestwood School District. We don't have a lot, but we do have the Red Devils. We have Friday Night Lights. We have the Crestwood Scarlet Guard Band where our community finally comes together. But in every map, every map, we are divided, split into two. Whether it's the OCRC map, the original Democratic map, the Huffman map, the Wise map or even the new map or split. But you know what? That can be OK if it's for the greater good, if the fact that our little community is split, which keeps other communities like Orange, Woodmere together, if it's for the greater good, for a greater map. All right. It's kind of like Solomon, we were willing to do that. But if it's just another way to gerrymander, then the small business owners like myself and my husband, the farmers who for generations have farmed Portage County, the blue collar workers, the white collar workers who are coming to our area, and the educators who dot our landscape, he worked too darn hard for me to stay silent about that. Now, it's been a long night, four and a half hours. I did not bring snacks. I don't know what I was thinking. You had a long night last night, and a long night tonight as well. And you have another day tomorrow. It's easy to tune us out, but I appreciate the folks who are still sitting here. I appreciate you looking at the speakers. Because you know what? This room and the folks who have been up here time after time. We are Ohio. It's not the extremes. It's the center. It's the people in the middle is the people who can disagree about what it really means for gerrymandering or why people are voting. And it's about our ability to have a conversation. The only way Ohio is going to get through the challenges that are ahead is remember the middle. And if we remember to create districts where people have conversations, again, whether it's the pandemic, the ongoing pandemic or public education, which I talked to you about in Youngstown, whether it's the opioid crisis which continues to ravage throughout our state or social injustice reforms that are necessary not only in Ohio but across the United States. Whether it's climate change or the toxic algae blooms of Lake Erie. No one party has all the answers. It's only when we have both parties working together at a table where we have, not the extremes in representatives, but people who know that they must be accountable to their constituents there in Columbus working together that Ohio will succeed. I'm a mom of two daughters. They are looking and love Ohio, but they will be gone. And that means that I'll be gone as well. We don't want that. We love Ohio. We want to be here in Ohio. Thank you for your time. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:47:23] Thank you. Next witness.

**Staff** [01:47:25] Jessica Epstein, followed by Jim Tye.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:47:36] Next, witness

**Staff** [01:47:38] Johnny Williams, followed by James Jerome Bell.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:47:51] Next witness, please,

**Staff** [01:47:53] Ray Freeman, followed by Crystal Gray.

**Crystal Gnau** [01:48:02] [inaudible]

**Staff** [01:48:11] That's you.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:48:18] We apologize, could you state your name and spell it, please?

**Crystal Gnau** [01:48:21] No, that's fine. It's mispronounced all the time. It's actually pronounced Gnau. People mistake it for Gray all the time. I'm I'm Crystal. My first name, Crystal. Last name again, Gnau. I'm from Clark County. I have a three hour drive ahead of me. First I want to say that I am not a public speaker. I am not that eloquent. However, I am very disappointed in the map that you have presented us. This is not bipartisan. this is not what we asked for. When 70 plus percent of the voters of Ohio have come to you to say this is what we want, they expect you to work for them. This is not working for them. This is working for you. Gerrymandering not only disenfranchises minorities, women, people of color, people of the LGBT community, it sends a signal to anyone who lives here, graduates college, that they should leave. It doesn't bring good people and good jobs to Ohio. Because, why? No one wants to stay here. What that does on a federal level, which I don't believe anyone has spoken to, is Ohio has been known as a purple state for many years. We benefit from being a purple state. We get federal contracts, federal dollars to help us with education, building projects and so forth. We have been schmoozed by all of the presidential hopefuls, presidents that are sitting and reelected. We've had Obama come through. We've had Clinton come through, Biden came through, Trump came through. Many of our leaders in recent years have stopped and care about Ohio. But if we continue to do this we're just going to become another red state that gets zero attention. Our tax dollars that we contribute to the state of Ohio as well as federal will be lost to another state. We will no longer be important. And if we are no longer important, jobs won't come here. We'll be shipping manufacturing out once again to Mexico, abroad or anywhere else. I have children who have graduated college. One is seeking a PhD and when he gets that, he'll move away because that's where his job will take him. I have a daughter that fears for her protection because there is a war on our body and our rights. She begs me daily to leave Ohio. No one in Ohio should grow up feeling safe and have that ripped away from them. Whether you're a woman or a person of color, whether you are part of the LGBT community, no one in Ohio should feel unsafe. And I get emotional when I talk about my children, just as any mother should and does. I don't like speaking in public, but I'm here because of them. I, I feel like what we've asked you to do is, is not that difficult. Many other states are asking the same. What you've presented us is very gerrymandered. It's still two thirds Republican. That's not reflective of Ohio. I've had great difficulty finding these maps. I've had a great difficulty trying to find my hometown on these maps because it's not clearly written. And it's not until today that I actually find out another link that I could find a better map. 70 percent of Ohio voters are not here today. There's a good possibility that they're not here because this process has not been transparent enough. The meetings haven't been conducive to their schedules or to where they live. Again, I drove three hours today. I appreciate your time, everyone sitting on this panel who has stayed to listen, but please understand it is a waste of our time. It is a waste of our money to not vote on an inappropriate map that we can all agree on. I don't feel like that's too much to ask. Thank you for your time. [applause].

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:53:27] Thank you. Our next witness.

**Staff** [01:53:34] Carolyn Hardin Levine, followed by Linda Cohar.

**Carolyn Hardin-Levine** [01:53:47] Hi, thank you for this opportunity. My name is Carolyn Hardin-Levine. Last name is Hardin-Levine.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:54:01] Thank you.

**Carolyn Hardin-Levine** [01:54:02] Can you understand me with my mask.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:54:03] Yes.

**Carolyn Hardin-Levine** [01:54:04] Good, because I had a sister passed away of COVID, so I appreciate everybody wearing their masks. I'm sorry that last woman got to me. I'm here today because I have registered Republican, I have registered registered Democrat, I have worked for both Republican and Democratic leaders. I was a CEO of a data company. I am now retired. And for the last 25 years, I have spent every election day working voter protection. I work it not with a party in mind, but to ensure voters get their say in the poll. The one thing that I can tell you is I would have nine of my friends here with me today had there been better notice given because they wanted to come. But they have people in hospitals and sick and other jobs that they have to attend to. So I'm speaking on all of our behalf. As voters of the state of Ohio, we voted and ask you to create a commission that followed three core principles, and I will not repeat them. You've heard them. You know what they are better than we do. We also know that the map that has been presented is not only an elongation of a map that has brought us shame in Ohio for being highly gerrymandered, but it exacerbates it. So what I will ask of you just very short and very sweet is to hear our voice. Hear that we're asking for fairness. I am a mother of five children and three have left the state, one because he is gay and does not feel safe here. A daughter who works in Boston because she she too is a public servant. And then another left for California. I moved here from Texas twenty five years ago. I'm embarrassed by my home state, but I want to be proud of Ohio. Ohio is where my home is. It's where I'll be til I die. but what I would ask is just to bring fairness back to our elections here. The people of color hear us when we say we want to vote and be heard as communities for which we live. And I ask that you give serious consideration because the first man that I saw of Cuyahoga County that looked anything representative of the districts that I have sat in and I have for voter protection for twenty five years, is that closer to the Democrats and what they put forth? I'm not saying that you intentionally put a bad map forth. I don't know your intentions. I can't look into your heart. But what I will tell you is we are better served when we have a fair and just system. Please do not turn Ohio like Texas, like the laughingstock of the country. I want to be proud of my state. Thank you. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:57:41] Thank you. Thank you very much.

**Carolyn Hardin-Levine** [01:57:45] Do you have any questions for a crying middle aged woman?

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:57:50] No [laughter] But thank you very much. Next witness.

**Staff** [01:57:55] Susan Lewis, followed by Terrence Murphy.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:58:05] Next witness,

**Staff** [01:58:07] Edward Neil, followed by Scott Nichols.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:58:17] Next, witness.

**Staff** [01:58:18] Mimi Plevin Foust, followed by Angela Chute Woodson.

**Mimi Plevin-Foust** [01:58:27] I'm taking my mask off. Thank you all so much. It's been a terribly long day and I really, really appreciate that you're hanging in there and you're listening to us. It really means a lot to us.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:58:37] State and spell your name, please.

**Mimi Plevin-Foust** [01:58:38] Sure. It's Mimi Plevin-Foust. I want to say that I don't think the current map that was voted forward should even be the basis of any changes because it's so slanted and it lacks consideration of so many important criteria. But what I would like to suggest is that you look closely at the three winners of the Ohio Fair Districts competition. People have talked about Jeff Wise's map. While it does split some communities, he did count the communities and he actually splits less than some of the other known maps. And then the other two people who won the competition along with Jeff, their maps are not on your website, but there are maps and with a narrative and explaining their maps are on the Fairdistrictsohio.org map. If you click on news and you and you read about the there competition, then you can find each of their maps along with their narrative. I really highly recommend you look at them because they could really be a fantastic basis to just grab one of those maps and go forward with it. It's...they're so well thought out and so, so thoughtful. I can tell you that the other first place winner, Pranav Padmanabhan, he really tried to keep communities together working with keeping school districts together, which I think is a very useful way. He was really working on trying to keep communities of interest together and yet still have fairness and still have a certain amount of competition. The other winner is Paul Nieves, and he also was trying to work very hard to have compact communities. And anyhow, I think that those three maps are really worth looking at, even if you don't find them all on your own website. I would just like to say that I as a Clevelander, I grew up in Shaker Heights. I love living here. And I moved away. I was on the East Coast for a long time. I came back here 18 years ago. And it's it's just a wonderful place to live. But the hard part is that I feel that based on the policies and the that are going on in Columbus, that we are not, our interests are not being considered in any way, as far as I can tell. I mean, we I, I live right near the border of Shaker and Cleveland. And literally over the weekend, seven people were shot in a 15 hour period. And, you know, we're losing our our kids. We're losing, you know, our our loved ones. And yet in Columbus, people are looking for ways to spread more guns all around the state with no regard for this. And there's just so many issues where I and pretty much everyone I know feel that we're not being taken into consideration in any way. I honestly kind of feel that Cleveland should secede from Ohio because that's how little consideration we're getting. And I think we give a lot of money to Columbus. So it would be nice if we got a little more weight in the maps and in in the issues that are considered. I will just say that the the map that was proposed really shows a staggering level of contempt for Ohio voters. And it's kind of heartbreaking. I don't know what I've done to earn that kind of contempt. And I think as individuals, each of you want to treat people with respect and want to be good public servants. So please don't let the fact that you're part of five people, you're in a majority, cover the fact, that how you vote and which map you put forward within in this week is going to reflect personally on you. You know, I know that speaker Cupp your your your sons were Eagle Scouts. And I'm sure that the Eagle Scouts don't believe that people should win races that have been rigged, you know, which is what a rigged map does. And you've worked so hard, Secretary LaRose, to to make sure that so many people got to vote in the last election and overcame so many obstacles. No, please don't let your. It shouldn't be sullied by voting for a tainted map and you know, the same for you, Auditor Faber and I, I, I just, you know, think about it individually of what it means for your own legacy and your own children and grandchildren. Thank you.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [02:03:46] Thank you very much. [applause] State is spell your name, please.

**Angela Shute-Woodson** [02:03:58] Sure. Good evening. It's Angela Shute Woodson. And thank you to the chairs. Thank you to the commission. Thank you for everyone for staying late. And we appreciate that. I come to you on behalf of wearing several titles, but actually I'm here as Angela Shute-Woodson of South Euclid, Ohio, whose state rep is Kent Smith of House District 8 and State Senate District twenty five, which is Senator Kenny Yuko. I live in what's called the West 5 when I look at this map of South Euclid. Which you have combined with East Cleveland, Cleveland Heights and University Heights. Why are we call West 5? We are 90 percent African-American. We're five streets. We share the university, Cleveland Heights University Heights School District. Most of our children in this district are confused where they go to school because their friends literally across Mooresville Stone a road go to the Lynnhurst South Euclid School District. They get confused even who their reps are at times. Some people think the rep is Janine Boyd because we are so close with Cleveland Heights and a lot of them play in the Cleveland Heights Rec Center. So when I look at this particular map, you're going to confuse young people even more that sit on a border and I would hope you would relook at this also as far as just income levels, school district levels, the fact that some municipalities are missing, such as Lynnhurts, I noticed on this map as well as Pepper Pike is missing on this map. But I hope you would take all of that in consideration along with race. It's also the school districts that are involved, because, like I said, we're five streets in a pretty big municipality that, like I said, is 90 percent African-American. And we're the only five streets that go to the Cleveland Heights University Heights School District. And now you're telling us we will no longer be with the majority of South Euclid. We are looking to possibly have a new state rep and a new state Senator, the way these maps are looking right now. So I would just hope you would, again, keep that in mind, because that was echoed from several people. When we talk about voter turnout and voter suppression, I am very passionate about young people and we try very hard to get young people to vote and have confidence in this government. And so it's going to be very hard for me who actually walks my block every election cycle along with participating in the city of Cleveland, because I do a lot of work in the city of Cleveland, trying to convince them to have trust in the system. Because I believe in this system. I believe in good government. I believe in public service. But it's going to be hard when I look at something like this to try to go back to them, to try to explain the why. They get the census situation. I don't want you to think they don't, but it's still going to be hard when you divide a community up, especially, like I said, South Euclid, that has five streets, that's predominantly African-American. That's believe it or not, I'm probably one of the elders on the street because it's very young, they're young families, to try to explain this. So just take that into consideration. I thank you.

**Angela Shute-Woodson** [02:07:33] Thank you. [applause].

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [02:07:33] Speaker?

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [02:07:38] You can you tell us what street you're talking about?

**Angela Shute-Woodson** [02:07:41] Sure, sure. The streets are East Antisdale.

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [02:07:43] Say that again please?

**Angela Shute-Woodson** [02:07:45] East Antisdale, Grosvenor, Eastway, Colony. I'm missing one. Who am I missing? Who am I missing? I missing somebody. Colony, East Antisdale. Did I say Grosvenor, my own street? I'm missing one. I can't -- forgive me because I can't think of the last one.

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [02:08:12] That's fine.

**Angela Shute-Woodson** [02:08:12] Yeah, but we fit in between kind of Cedar to explain it, and kind of this Wal-Mart development now off of Warrensville Center Rd. But just please, like I said, consider that because it's a lot of small pockets when you look at this map. And I'm just one example, like I said, of where I live. But when I look at this map and even look at Fairview Park, where my son used to live, there are just small corridors within these different suburban municipalities that, you know, you're going to divide us up tremendously, even more.

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [02:08:45] All right, thanks.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [02:08:48] Thank you very much.

**Angela Shute-Woodson** [02:08:49] Thank you.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [02:08:51] Oh, yes?

**Auditor of State Keith Faber** [02:08:51] I was just going to ask you a question. Who's your current representative, you said it was Smith?

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [02:08:58] Yes. Right now we're in House District 8 with Kent Smith. And right now our Senator is Kenny Yuko in the Senate District 25.

**Auditor of State Keith Faber** [02:09:05] Currently are all together.

**Angela Shute-Woodson** [02:09:07] Currently, we're all together. But if you do this particular map in front of me, we won't be.

**Auditor of State Keith Faber** [02:09:13] Thank you your testimony.

**Angela Shute-Woodson** [02:09:14] Thank you.

**Auditor of State Keith Faber** [02:09:15] Thank you for specifically telling us about what on the map is bad, right?

**Angela Shute-Woodson** [02:09:20] Thank you.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [02:09:22] The next witness.

**Staff** [02:09:25] The next witness appears it's spelled LorI.

**Loh** [02:09:32] Loh!

**Staff** [02:09:34] Followed by Eugene Ward.

**Loh** [02:09:44] Good evening, everybody. Oh, thank you for all of you, still here. Today, I'm here. My name is Loh. It's pronounced loo. I have got the opportunity to meet a couple of you in the past, especially our budget process. So for me to come here to talk about this map, I can tell you honestly, today we see all kinds of talents here. Some people, they can draw a very good map. Some of them don't really know how to draw maps, but they understand that. So the maps actually is a way to navigate. What drive this country to navigate is the so-called American dream. This map represents many, many people's dreams. Some of the people's dream will be joined with better map while some other people are thinking about having the map to get reelected. So let's get it to the point. What kind of map do you really want? If we keep going this way, not just our children, not just our ancestors. Well, I'm a tourist here. As all of you can see, because all the problems here, is the inequities. So as a tourist, you only heard of one of my fellow tourists saying how we are in the community for a long time and we have not been treated fairly. So in this case, I think the very near future, we will have certain people coming here dreaming, drawing the map, to follow the step by. Well, you know, Texas always will to be another country, California people there, they always talk about they want to split in two 1/2 or three. Virginia and West Virginia already separated before we were born. So the next map, we will draw eventually will be the [inaudible] to Ohio and for Ohio maps or black Ohio maps and white Ohio maps. Or based the parties. But please remember, the American dream to build this country is from multi parties. So if any parties only think about its own survival instead of all the people, that map will come up sooner or later. Enjoy the evening. Thank you, everybody.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [02:12:56] Thank you.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [02:13:01] State and spell your name, please.

**Eugene Ward** [02:13:04] Thank you, Senator Sykes. Thank you, Speaker Cupp. Thank you, Senator Sykes, for holding this meeting. My name is Eugene Ward, I'm pastor of the Greater Love Baptist Church here in the city of Cleveland. I'm also a vice president of the Mt. Pleasant Ministerial Alliance. I'm on the board of the Mt. Pleasant Now Development Corporation. I'm chairman of the Board of Bishops for Kingdom Connection International. Kingdom Connection Fellowship International in Columbus, Ohio, where our bishop is our presiding prelate, Bishop Jerome H. Ross. I came to talk with you today because of this map. And I want you to know that I got my appetite for politics back when I was a teenager, when Carl Stokes and Louis Stokes were elected to office. Louis Stokes, when my dad died, became my godfather and helped to raise me. He was... My best friend is Lewis Chucky Stokes, who lives in Detroit, Michigan. This travesty of a map, though, that has been given to us, I do realize makes us distrust government even more. I realize also that our census numbers are down. So, yes, it makes it necessary for you to do redistricting. But this looks like pure gerrymandering if I've never seen it before. I want you to also know that the redistricting really gives the fear that many people have of government, and especially in the African-American community. This map speaks of racism. It speaks of the fear of gerrymandering. It speaks of white supremacy. It speaks of partyism, and it speaks of, speaks of outright bigotry. It's an agenda for more individuals to become politicians and make sure that their pockets align. Mr. Glassburn showed us a map and he's already stated that the communities are divided even in the map that he is looking at, as well as the maps that you are looking at. But it is a time for us to also bring our communities together, bring our politics together, bring our issues together, bring our programs together, and especially bring our people together. We're wondering if this coming together is just another futile effort, if this is going to be an exercise in futility, if you're just here to get it, get to the point where you hear all of our gripes and complaints, but you're going to do whatever you want to do anyway. We cannot be a republic that is concerned with liberty and justice for all. If we're going to continue to design districts and legislation that strip and reduce liberty and justice for all. For those who are concerned about just being in political office and making sure that they get taxpayer dollars, I remind you of what Psalm 62:11 God has spoken it once. This have I heard twice. Power belongs to God. It does not belong to man. It does not belong to people. It is delegated to us. It is loaned to us. He continues to rule. He continues to govern. I am asking that you look at this map, which is going to continue to divide this country and divide these people and take your conscience home and go before the Lord and ask him, are you doing the right thing for yourselves or are you doing the right things for the people of God? Thank you very much. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [02:16:50] Thank you. Next witness

**Staff** [02:16:52] Kari Capecchi, followed by Justin Evaristo.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [02:17:13] State and spell your name, please.

**Justin Evaristo** [02:17:16] My name is Justin Evaristo. Yes. So I am from Cuyahoga County, Beechwood, specifically. And like many before me, I have concerns that I was hoping to voice about the district maps being drawn here in Ohio. So over the past decade, Ohio voters have been pretty closely split between the two parties, approximately 55 percent for Republicans and 45 percent for Democrats. This tight margin is demonstrated, most notably in our designation as a swing state in presidential elections. However, if you were to look at our state government, you would be fooled into thinking that we have almost no Democratic voters and instead are a deeply red state. In the General Assembly today, Republicans hold around double the number of seats compared to Democrats, and all of the executive positions are also filled by Republicans. This is allowed Republican lawmakers have complete control over the levers of power with little concern of being replaced by their constituents if they do not represent their interests. People of Ohio voted overwhelmingly in favor of amending our state constitution because we were tired of legislators diluting our votes, silencing our voices all to maintain their own political power. The people of Ohio demanded that fair maps be produced. Maps that would create a government that accurately reflects us as a state, reflects our diversity and our values. Yet it seems to me that a certain political party here has not been participating in this process in good faith. The Republican Party has been deliberately delayed the process by waiting to propose their version of the map until the last minute, giving little time for the voters to scrutinize and for their colleagues across the aisle to debate it. And after all this, waiting to present us with another map that is skewed in their favor, albeit a little less brazenly. Analysis shows that these, this proposed map, which decreases the disparity between the two parties but coincidentally will allow Republicans to retain their veto proof majority. And yet you have the audacity to claim that this is not, that you did not do party analysis, partisan analysis on this map. The redistricting commission has held hearings on weekdays, often during business hours, forcing concerned citizens like myself to take some time off of work. Time that many don't, do not have the luxury of spending simply to for an opportunity to participate in this process, participate in this process that has consequences that will affect them in future. Thinly veiled attempts to hide their handiwork from Ohio voters. Tactics like these are not new or unique. Administrative foot dragging and targeted exclusion have been a staple, and not only in our state's politics, but throughout the country for decades, the consequences of which have fallen squarely on the shoulders of the historically oppressed in our society. Minorities, women, the LGBTQ community and the impoverished. Coincidentally, these communities often don't vote for Republicans as well. The people of Ohio are tired of these political games. We're tired of the disconnect between the representatives and the represented. We demand that fair maps and transparency that we were promised. We demand fair representation in our government. And also, as a side note, I noticed that Secretary LaRose mentioned a number of times that that, claimed that he had been acting in good faith. But to me, it seems that that has not borne out in the end. And what has happened so.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [02:20:43] Any questions? Thank you very much. [applause] Next witness.

**Staff** [02:20:56] Chad Stevens, followed by Michael Pelligrino.

**Michael Pellegrino** [02:21:14] Hello, I'm Michael Pellegrino. It's very good to hear your name called after waiting for a while. I appreciate everyone who's still here and listening. I actually was not going to come tonight, even though I've been following the redistricting process for a very long time. My wife works in a hospital and she has been having to get up early in the morning to go to work and early before I even get out of bed in the morning. And I went down to breakfast this morning and she had put a pen on top of the witness form before she left for work. So that's why I'm here tonight, because she left that pen, that little message from me that she couldn't deliver in person. I am a huge fan. My hero is Abraham Lincoln. I have a big picture of him over my desk at work. Abraham Lincoln said, think nothing of me, take no thought for the political fate of any man whatsoever, but come back to the truths that are in the Declaration of Independence. Abraham Lincoln said that all of the troops, equality, liberty, inalienable rights and this one. Government derives its just power from the consent of the governed. Government derives its just power from the consent of the governed. That's what Abraham Lincoln said. You know, I woke up to really bad news this morning about how terrible all of our sports teams this week did this weekend. Reports from the meeting in Dayton that said that the the all of the feedback that was to, and I think the headline was to to, ensure a Republican majority, a supermajority in the redistricting process. And, you know, I have to tell you that people had asked me because they knew I was following this process. What do I what I thought about? And I said, well, you know, the new process will eliminate the worst excesses of gerrymandering. I never thought it would actually turbocharge the worst excesses of gerrymandering. But that seems to be what appeared when those maps were produced. I was going to go to the county fair, to Wayne County Fair to night with my wife. That's what we were going to do. It's a great county fair. I hope people have been to it. It only cost two dollars to get in and kids under 12 are free. It's a great county fair. I imagine that everyone on this panel has been invited down to a county fair or to a 4-H club or to an Elks Club or a high school to award a prize to a first place winner, to a gold medal winner or to a gold, a best and best in show. And I imagine that you told them about the importance of competition. I don't think anyone would have ever said, you know what, the real thing you need to do is learn how to game the system for partisan advantage. And I truly hope that as this process works out, no one's going to game this system for partisan advantage. I agree with this gentleman right here. I'm all for competition. I didn't like the part of the redistricting reform that was going to say, that talked about representative representational fairness. I don't think anyone should be guaranteed so many seats. I would have rather said that they had to be drawn to the majority of seats are competitive, are competitive, because I think that's what it means when it says that government derives its just power from the consent of the governed. That when you have to earn votes and not the votes that have been gained, but actually earn votes, we're better served as the people of Ohio. That's what I would like to see. And then just one last thought. Redistricting cannot make every seat in Ohio competitive, but having nonpartisan primaries can't. Having nonpartisan top two primaries. Ohioans would be better served if in parts of the states two Republicans are running in the general election. And in other parts of states, two Democrats are running in the general election. That doesn't require a constitutional amendment that can be legislated. And I would encourage that if we really, truly believe in competition, like Ohioans believe in competition. We love competition. If we truly believe in let's make our elections competitive, let's not just not only make competitive maps the best we can. Let's also have nonpartisan top two primaries so that the two best candidates for an area are going to face off against each other in the general election. Thank you for your time. I appreciate it. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [02:26:39] Thank you. You know, in addition to being a senator and thank you very much for allowing me to serve you, I am also professor emeritus of political science at Kent State University. And just listening to the testimony, just reminds me of the principles that this country was built upon and even the oath of office that we take. It is inspire... It's inspiring to sit on the side of the table to listen to you one at a time, just march up and just plead your hearts out to us. And I want to let you know, it's just not... We're listening. We're listening. We appreciate your sentiments. Next, witness.

**Staff** [02:27:30] Chad Stevens, followed by Lori Cumler.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [02:27:40] Mr. Greg Moore, are you leaving? Come on back here. Yes, sit down. We're gonna get to you. We're gonna get to you. Would you state your name and spell it please?

**Lori Kumler** [02:28:01] Hi, my name is Lori Kumler. Thank you for your work in public service and for being here this evening. I am amazed and overwhelmed and blown away by all of the comments everyone has made. I'm just really impressed. I don't have a great deal to add, so I'll be short. I currently live in Stark County, 50th Ohio House district, the 29th Ohio Senate District. I feel that it doesn't matter where I live in Ohio because most districts are safe. I guess the question is safe for whom? We know the answer, and it's not safe for any of us here, for Ohio's citizens. Part of me feels like I have no business being here on a Monday evening during... driving in an hour each way, missing dinner with my family. There's nothing particularly complicated from my perspective about why the proposed districts are unsafe for democracy in Ohio. I'm here on behalf of my family, my children who will vote within the next decade. I care about this issue. Many others who could not make it here tonight also care about this issue. We want competitive elections. We want real choices. We voted to change Ohio's constitution to achieve these aims. In my mind, gerrymandering is not in the eye of the beholder. Just as two plus two equals four is not the data. The numbers, the evidence are very clear. Sixty seven percent does not equal fifty five percent. I earnestly ask you to carry out what Ohio voters have asked you to do to create competitive districts where everyone's vote matters. Thank you. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [02:29:55] Thank you. Next, witness

**Staff** [02:30:00] Sue Dyke, followed by Kristen Christie, Haggy George.

**Sue Dyke** [02:30:14] But there were some points I wanted to make of my own. I'm Sue Dyke, I live in Cleveland Heights and, you know, I didn't know if you knew, but I'd like to give a shout out to all the people who were up in the three overflow classrooms here. I don't know if you know that that there were that many people here. People who took time out of their day and even the overflow rooms had overflow. And, you know, I want to just tell you a little bit about me. Most people that know me think I'm pretty mild mannered, that I'm a nice person, that I don't get angry very much. You you bring out the worst in me and why I'm angry. And there's many reasons. But first and foremost, you sent my kids away. I have a 22 year old daughter who's gay, who is a teacher now in Chicago. She went to college in Minnesota. My son is an accountant for one of the big, big four, yeah big four. And he lives in Richmond, Virginia. They're not coming back. This is why I'm mad. People, politicians have made it uninhabitable for young people. And so and that is coming from a very blue part of the state. But they also see that their rights are being assaulted. And that's what gerrymandering brings. And this is why I am always looking for an opportunity just to talk. But anyway, I did just want to thank the Senate Dems for offering a compromise map. I hope you take it very seriously, like meet together without us and talk to each other, maybe go out for dinner tonight. I know it's late, but, you know, I don't know. There's a lot of places open. Chipotle is always good. But anyway and thanks for pointing out that these are... Representative Sykes or Leader Sykes, I'm sorry that these are the Ohio, the citizens of Ohio's maps, not Matt Huffman's map. And where is he, by the way? Did he leave again? He's running this process and he doesn't even bother to show up. This is really frustrating. But or stay. And and thank you for a viable ten year map. We want a ten year map. We don't want to do this in four years. And I don't think you do either. All right. So reminder, congressional maps are due in 17 days and we don't even know who the legislative committee is that will run the process. We don't have proposed maps and we don't have any hearings scheduled. This is my constructive feedback. All right. I hope you're hearing it. I know it's hard to work on two things at once, but we did suggest early on that these these these hearings, these processes be done concurrently, but they haven't been done. And I look forward to the time when I don't feel like I need to keep coming up here and drawing your attention to to my anger. OK, thank you. Any questions? Thank you.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [02:33:37] Thank you. Yes, go ahead.

**Auditor of State Keith Faber** [02:33:49] We have been working behind the scenes with our staff because there's a rule in Ohio called Sunshine. It means the four of us can't get in a room, talk about, three of us can, talk about maps and redistricting because we would be violating the Sunshine laws. Our staff, on the other hand, can and frankly, have been all weekend long working--.

**Sue Dyke** [02:34:11] and before that, I'm pretty sure

**Auditor of State Keith Faber** [02:34:12] working together and talking about that. But we continue to have conversations back and forth and we continue to work. You know, this is one of those things I wish like you, I wish this had been done a long time ago. But the reality is, is we've got a Wednesday deadline that we're going to do our darndest to hit. And we will continue to work on that. And I will just extend to my colleagues what I've extended before I'm happy to buy dinner or whatever. So let's keep working. And I appreciate the leaders of both the Republican leaders in the Democrat leaders who have worked with the secretary and me and the governor to figure out what we can do with our staff to see if we can't land this plane with a bipartisan, I agree, 10-year map.

**Auditor of State Keith Faber** [02:34:54] And please, you know, please make sure that you are not sacrificing the quality of the map. You don't have to. Lots of people have created great maps. All right. And and you don't have to sacrifice quality or or you know, or you make them partisan, even for that matter. And so I realize you're under a tight timeline. But, you know, this sucks for us, too. And I don't I don't want to have to do it again. I mean, and if I feel like I'm being listened to. Right, I think that that that helps. All right. By the way, I have snacks in Dave's bag back here. If there's anybody who wants something, trail mix. OK, you took off your mask, are you going to ask me another another statement? OK. All right. Thank you.

**Staff** [02:35:49] OK, Christy, Hadigeorge, followed by Jimmy Graham Moki.

**Kristi Hadgigeorge** [02:36:01] Good evening. Good evening. My name is Kristi Hadgigeorge. That's it. I promise. I live in Lakewood, House District 13, Senate District 23. I initially came to this hearing today as solely just a listener to feel energized by my fellow fed up Ohio citizens. But as I listened in the overflow room down the hall, I heard a testimony that enraged me and it needs to be repeated. So I just whipped us up. After promising countless times last week that the commission would get all hands on deck and work tirelessly with one another and staff over the weekend and through the nights to fix these partisan maps. Not one single meeting was held. Not one hour did you spend together trying to right the wrongs of this pathetic map and focus on the will of the people. You heard hours of complaints. You gave us a lot of pacifying and condescending B.S. and then you went home to dinner and went to sleep. You woke up, you watched the Buckeyes lose. You went to sleep. You woke up, you watched the Browns lose, you went to bed. And today you woke up just to sit on your hands and watch the rest of your citizens lose. That's something. Quite the statement or non statement. We've been pleading with you. These maps are not the will of the people. I can't say I'm surprised any longer. The whole process is felt like a setup from the beginning and feigning interest in specifics now feels very performative. There's a day and a half left until this is voted on. Do you think anything substantial will get done at this hour? No. Instead, the supermajority Republicans get exactly what they want, a slightly watered down version of their hyper partisan map that is still gerrymandered to all hell. What a shame. What a shame for all of us. Being here today, listening to the past three hours of testimony, sorry, this was written hours ago, I felt that energy I was hoping for, but hearing that not one iota of our energy was carried with you into our week, your weekend plans. Well, now this all feels like a waste. You're not even trying. You either have one final trick up your sleeves or you're just letting us air our grievances now to feel like, hey, at least we tried. You don't care. One last comment, Governor DeWine is not here. So I'll speak to an empty seat. Keep our 50 million. You're spending it in falsely advertising our state is progressive, one look at these maps and the ever growing extremism and people will see right through your expensive marketing ploy. There was a previous speaker that was right to say that the young people are frustrated. Voices are diluted. It was Miss Jaladah. I'd like to reiterate what a fellow speaker in the beginning hour of this had mentioned, that we are leaving. The youth is leaving the state. I bought a house in January. I'm going off script now. I bought a house in January. I thought it was going to be my pride and joy that last nine months, it's felt like a ball and chain. I feel stuck here. I feel stuck here because you guys don't represent my people. You don't represent, represent and you don't give a shit. You don't care. This was your map. This this is what you came up with to say we'll figure it out like this will be the starting point and then we'll go from there. That's embarrassing. My partner and I have had several talks very recently and specifically within the last two months about selling the house and moving out of state, and it's gotten to be real conversations and thankfully, it's a seller's market. So it could happen very quickly. But the maps just solidify that decision if these were to continue. For our household and for many others my age. So please hold yourself accountable, allow for competition, please. Please allow for competition on both, in both parties. Listen to your constituents, do your job, and please don't let Ohio slide even further into extremism. It's dangerous for every one of us. That's all. [applause]

**Staff** [02:40:23] Jimmy Germulke, followed by Emily Barcia.

**Jimmy Germalic** [02:40:41] You want me to spell my name? Germalic. I'd like to start out that people's hearts would be open to this message, a little prayer, Hail Mary full of grace. The Lord is with thee blessed art, thalamic women and blessed are the fruit of our own Jesus. Holy Mary, mother of God. Pray for us sinners now. Ready. Amen. Now, when I read this, don't think I'm getting off the topic because I came here for Governor DeWine, because I've been trying to get a meeting with him, because in North Dakota and Ohio, I'm the only one, I should be in the Guinness Book of Record that is trying to run for Congress and outside the two party nominees. And I wanted to say to him that I'd have to contact thirty thousand people when you have the Delta virus to get on the ballot. And the ballot is still not in operation. But when I come to the end, you'll see I'm right on this when I'm talking about. So that's why in the beginning it might seem like I'm burying or something. I said, Dear Governor Divine, I'm writing on behalf of James Germalic to grant him a hearing. The humble talk to the humble. Lincoln would talk to the common people day in and day out. Thousands of people came in and he listened to them and did what he could for them. The president's signature opened doors no one else could open. When you were a U.S. senator, I'm talking about Governor DeWine in Washington, D.C. You said to James, me, keep on talking. Well, why don't you follow your words and let James talk to you? It's no good to say that if there's no one to talk to. A guy said to Lincoln, why do you waste your time with all these people when the Great War is going on? Lincoln didn't get mad. He replied, I have pondered this many times, but I come to the conclusion that these are the people that put me here and these are the people I want to hear from. I am here for anyone has needed me. If Lincoln, the president could talk to the common people than you, Governor. Sure could. James is a Christian, a Catholic and pro-life, so are you. So why won't you talk to him? Even the Roman world let St. Paul state his defense again and again. St. Paul gave his defense to Governor Felix and then Governor Festus. Felix would call Paul up to hear him over a period of two years. When Governor Festus replied replace Governor Felix, he gave Paul a hearing. Then Festus and King Agrippa gave Paul a hearing. Lincoln would see anybody. Lincoln was the guiding light of the Republican Party, the best president. You are Republican, so why don't you follow his example? Plato and Socrates? Plato said. In the Republic, justice is the cement of republic. We have a republic. OK, Lincoln said. You want justice for yourself, but deny it to your opponent. I give justice to friend and foe alike. A preset charity is optional. Justice is an obligation. This is about the most unjust situation possible. James Me not only has a compelling case is also a request for justice to be done for him. In this environment of a circulating virus and it endangers people's health. It is a fact thatCuyahoga County throws out three out of four signatures handed in. James found this out in 2008 and 2016 Ralph Nader and 2004 in his run for president also encountered this. Requirement of two thousand five hundred sixty six signatures, therefore, would require up to 30000 contacts to be made with people since one since one out of every three or four people you approach sign your petition and three out of four are thrown out. With the Delta variant going around and being 1000 times more virulent than the original coronavirus, it just does not make sense to contact that many people. That is why I'm asking you, Governor, to hear James out to find a solution to this pressing problem before the ballots are printed, which is coming up? James gathered about 600 signatures in a month of July. Since then, the Delta virus has got worse. We would like to talk to you if something can be worked out to allow him to get on the ballot this time. Given the unique circumstances of the virus making it unwise to contact so many people. One solution will be allowed to allow him to pay a fee in lieu of the remaining signatures not obtained due to the virus and delta variant. I'm reading so fast because I wanted to get to this, which has to do with your problem. Lincoln would not compromise on either the breakup of the Union, divorce the South, divorcing the north or end slavery. The peace democrats would not compromise on the union but would let the South have their slaves. Lincoln would not compromise on a principle of morality. The Republicans would like to give justice to the Democrats, but the Republicans cannot compromise on principle of morality. When the Democrats took on one hundred million abortion, same sex marriage and Obamacare, whose first principle is euthanasia with death panels not under congressional or judicial review, they divorced the Republicans. The Republicans can no longer give them justice because they bring along with them abortion, same sex marriage and euthanasia. The Republicans can't give them territory in which to extend their kingdom of evil if Republicans. To make districts in a in a just way, they'd be giving up districts to Democrats who bring the murder of 100 million babies, same sex marriage and Obamacare, whose first principle is euthanasia with death panels, not other congressional judicial review on the people in their district, just as Lincoln couldn't compromise on slavery. So the Republicans can't compromise on abortion, same sex marriage and euthanasia. Now, here's the last thing.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [02:46:09] Can you wrap it up? can you wrap it up, please?

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [02:46:12] OK, I'll read the last. This is the last paragraph. There is only one way for the Republicans to give justice to the Democrats. That is, they give up abortion, same sex marriage and euthanasia. And as long as that divide, which nobody will bring out, nobody will speak on, that divide of immorality. There can't be no compromise. Okay, because as I said, Lincoln said he said, you want justice for yourself, but you deny it to your opponent. I give justice to friend and foe alike. But he couldn't give justice to the South and say, I'm going to let you have your slavery. And the Republicans cannot give justice to the Democrats as long as they hold on to abortion, same sex marriage and euthanasia. And that is the core of it.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [02:47:02] Yes. Yeah. Next witness,

**Staff** [02:47:08] Emily Bottcher, followed by representive Stephanie House.

**Emily Bacha** [02:47:17] Good evening 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, the OEC, and myself as a concerned citizen. I oppose the state legislative district maps currently under consideration 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 worked in a number of community facing environmental education, advocacy and engagement roles which have taken me across northeast Ohio. And through these experiences, I have seen the vastly different environments our 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 waste water and lead exposure. That is the definition of environmental injustice. Sorry I've been so excited to speak all all evening. Years of intentional disinvestment and formerly red line Cleveland neighborhoods and nearby Indurain suburbs on the east side have resulted in an aging housing stock riddled with lead paint and lead and water issues, declining tree canopy cover, proximity to legacy brownfields as well as poor air quality that has been deemed failing year after year by the American Lung Association. Climate change impacts, especially more frequent heatwaves and increased precipitation exacerbate these environmental hazards. Without a functioning and fair democracy, Ohio will continue to perpetuate such environmental injustices. Under our current maps, Ohio has many districts that crack apart communities. Unfortunately, the map currently under consideration by the Ohio Redistricting Commission perpetuates the cracked and packed districts of the past. Specifically proposed House districts 13, 14, 18, 19, 20, 21 and 22 to 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 US EPA's EJ screen and environmental justice mapping tool. 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 crafting of these communities dilutes their voices and their power to advocate for a healthier environment, for their families and for their neighbors. Ohioans deserve better. Ohioans want districts and representatives that reflect our perspectives, our lived experiences and our communities. Representatives elected by and for communities will know the problems that they face, including these shared environmental injustices. When we have districts representative of communities and not partisan interests, our environment and our communities win maps like Ohio's Citizens Redistricting Commission Unity Maps, which took seriously the constitutional requirements for drawing the maps are what Ohioans deserve. Thank you for your consideration of this critical perspective and this is very, very important process.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [02:50:44] Thank you for your contribution. Appreciate it. Thank you.

**Staff** [02:50:49] Next witness represents Stephanie House, followed by Greg Moore.

**Rep. Stephanie Howse** [02:51:02] Good evening to the chairs of the commission and commission members again, my name is Stephanie Howse and I'm the current state representative in Ohio 11 House District, which currently consists of Cleveland's parts of Ward 2 two precincts in Ward four, Cleveland Ward five and six, Ward seven, one precinct in Ward 9 one precinct in Ward 10, Cleveland, Ward 12, Newburgh Heights and Garfield Heights. In looking at this new proposed map, the first thing that I see is that the entire district is broken up, which I mean, on surface, people are like, well, you've got to get fair districts. But then when you actually look at the demographics of things. So I'm just going to go quickly through these districts. When you look at District 14, it takes currently on the east side of Cleveland, wards 2, 4, and 12 and merges them with the west side of Cleveland wards eleven, thirteen and sixteen, one west side suburb, Brooklyn, and one east side suburb, Garfield Heights. Which again, giving a suggestion, I really do believe that people who are drawing the maps need to look at the cultural context. The bridge that divides our east and west side can be very... It could be a good start to beginning to use Westside communities with Eastside communities not doing the zigzagging, which is which is currently being done. When you see the new District Eighteen, which has downtown Cleveland one district, Ward five, which is on the east side of Cleveland, and then the districts or wards 11, 14, 16 and 17, which is on the West Side, along with Fairview Park, which is on the West Side. It's a west suburb of Cleveland. Looking at District Twenty, you have wards four six and not people talked about that one before going to District Thirteen. Again, you have part of downtown, you have Cleveland Ward seven, which is on the east side of Cleveland, Cleveland Ward fifteen, which is on the west side of Cleveland, along with Lakewood and Rocky River, which are west side suburbs. We talked about earlier District nineteen. And then there's district twenty two, district twenty two, which basically has all these suburbs kind of on the south and east side of Cuyahoga County. Now I'm bringing this up and the reason why it compelled me to come and testify today is because I currently represent the largest concentration of African-Americans in the state. House district eleven has sixty five percent African-Americans. And when you look at how, and it was told from the very beginning that race was not taken into consideration as a part of drawing this map, I always like. OK, well, let me let me check on the other side. Right. I wanted to look at the highest concentration of white people, and it's a lot of them, but the highest concentration is House District eighty four. House District eighty four has ninety seven point three percent white Ohioans that live in there. And then I looked for it again in oh, coincident? It's still House District eighty four and House District eighty four, which is right south of Lima, is still basically intact. And so I guess my question to the district is, how is it that the highest concentration of African-Americans has been literally obliterated in these proposed maps? And when you look at the highest concentration of white Ohioans, they are kept intact, they're kept in whole, their communities are kept in whole. And we need to change that. Getting into the last components of that. What we look at just what was presented to people. People cannot understand at this. You don't know the city, these the communities you are using. And you, literally, what I did as a full state representative is use what is known as Dave's Redistricting. Who is Dave? I'm appreciative of it, but that is not. I mean, seriously, like we have to treat the people's information better than this. We are talking about trying to communicate information. People learn very differently. Some people visually, they can get it, but other people need to read it. You should be able to have the right stuff, OK, and go from there. And that's basically it in a nutshell. We can do better. Ohio's African-American representation. It is very hard, you know, just anybody to run. But if we are looking to have fairness that it must include the racial and cultural ethnicities and cultures when it looks into this map. This map does not do it and is going to be very problematic. So thank you all so much for your time. Any questions,.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [02:55:56] Secretary LaRose?

**Rep. Stephanie Howse** [02:55:59] So that's good. I agree with you that Dave's Redistricting sounds like...something the [inaudible] provides so we're all trying to work on the tools that we've got. You mentioned the concentration of minority Ohioans, African-American Ohioans in your district. One of the concerns with putting too many people together in one district is packing problem, right, fact that we want to create the maximum number of minority opportunity districts and that kind of thing. I'd ask you to take a look on Dave's Redistricting at the Democratic proposal that they presented earlier and I'd love to hear your comments on that. Give me a call.

**Rep. Stephanie Howse** [02:56:40] Absolutely. I will absolutely do that. And again, just given the things of if you wanted to look at and it is not necessarily looking to break people up, but I think culturally, if you look at Cleveland and you keep downtown, as people said, downtown is currently split, keep in downtown whole. It is a community, I think even merging with some of the communities on the east side of Cleveland. You can get to the numbers. Right. And that was the one thing with, in my current district probably had the most population loss of any place. So we need to add some people, you have to go somewhere if you had a choice. I think going south and east versus east and west would actually get us there and have the intent of the law.

**Secretary of State Frank LaRose** [02:57:19] Thank you.

**Rep. Stephanie Howse** [02:57:20] You're welcome.

**Rep. Stephanie Howse** [02:57:22] Auditor Faber.

**Auditor of State Keith Faber** [02:57:24] Thanks, just just to follow up on that. I agree that it's important that we try and keep communities together and that also that where we can we draw, draw minority, majority and minority influence districts. And as somebody who represents one of those districts based on your testimony, I assume you understand or you would agree with me that to hit that in an area like Cleveland where there's a concentration of folks, is going to be very difficult to draw districts that keep communities together and provide minority input in ways that don't get accused of packing individuals together in one area. I mean, I just looked at some maps that were presented by, frankly, your leaders. And frankly, I kind of like the maps better than what we're seeing and we're having that conversation. But the concern could be that those tend to pack in ways that the Democrat indexes, particularly in certain areas of Cleveland, are going to be really high compared to what would be considered a competitive 50/50 district.

**Rep. Stephanie Howse** [02:58:32] So through the chair to the auditor, when it comes to that area, the reality is we're just Cleveland is a Democratic city. I mean, you're talking about currently right now, I have a Democrat Democratic performance index of like 86, 87 percent. And that's literally that because, like minds usually live together. Right. So I think the reality is creating districts that are culturally, yes, there is some competitiveness. But you can really get the competitiveness kind of in the outskirts where people are, you know, I mean, that's that's where it happens. Usually in the suburban areas, like some of these urban areas, you're not going to necessarily get that. And I think if you had a preference, you have to look at people's culture. And I would layer on top of it. When you're dealing with people who are already a concentration of poverty, who are really dealing with transportation, housing issues, health care and everything else, to just dilute that voice to everyone else I think is going to be very problematic and it will be diluted. And the issues that are currently not being addressed from The State of Ohio will be further diminished with a map like that and having representation like this.

**Auditor of State Keith Faber** [02:59:38] So, Mr. Chair, to the representative, I don't want to see you and I are singing from the same hymnal. But the reality is, is there are going to be districts that you're going to have a representational index in certain areas that tend one way or another. I look I mean,.

**Rep. Stephanie Howse** [02:59:54] That's going to be happening. I don't think that's the necessarily the issue, I'm sorry...

**Auditor of State Keith Faber** [02:59:58] And I was going to say, look, the same thing in rural areas of this state as well. You kind of mentioned over in western Ohio where Representative Cupp and sorry, Speaker Cupp and President Huffman come from, it's going to be real hard to draw a 50/50 district over there as well. And so we know that that's going to be a factor. We're going to have areas that that we tend to to see concentrations.

**Rep. Stephanie Howse** [03:00:21] Right.

**Auditor of State Keith Faber** [03:00:22] And frankly, in that capacity, I think you would probably agree with me keeping communities of interest together. Right. And like similar communities are at that point the priority in those areas instead of diluting them to get some 50 50 competitive.

**Rep. Stephanie Howse** [03:00:35] So the reason why that I brought that up was because of the district that I represent be the highest concentration of African-Americans. It just so happens to be when I looked at what was the highest concentration of white Ohioans, it's in House District 84. And what I was looking at as the the goal of what we were presented is to try to look for that political fairness, that 50/50, what I am saying is in this current map, when you look at how District 84, it is not broken up. Look the way House District 11 and all these different is split. House District 11 is currently split in seven different ways, with the highest concentration of African-Americans. House District 84 with the highest concentration of white Ohioans is not split at all, is virtually the same district. No, no, I'm telling you that that's what I'm sharing with you. And it's still the same number. So the one that's House District 11 doesn't have 11 and all these different new numbers, but 84 is consistently basically the same. And so if people did not look at it, I want to put it on record and bring it to people's attention.

**Auditor of State Keith Faber** [03:01:34] Thank you.

**Auditor of State Keith Faber** [03:01:34] You're welcome.

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [03:01:35] Mr. Chairman? I want to thank you for coming and sharing that information with us, you know, you live around here. And I've come over time to understand that there's dynamics here that you might not find many places. And the way that you've gone through this, I think has been very helpful. I just want to thank you for that.

**Rep. Stephanie Howse** [03:01:58] You're welcome. All right. Thank you. [applause]

**Staff** [03:02:06] Greg Moore, followed by Seth Bridger.

**Greg Moore** [03:02:13] Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, Cochairs and all the members who've been here since four or at least. And my name is Greg Moore, I had scheduled to testify tomorrow. I'm the co-chair of the Ohio Citizens Redistricting Commission. But because my leader asked me to come back, I decided to come back. And also I want to hear sort of where we were going toward the end. I have a few comments to make and they won't be duplicated, what I'm going to say tomorrow. But it's just more about process. Tomorrow, you'll hear some official comments about the maps have been presented, as well as some comments about the new maps that have been presented tonight. First, I want to ask my friend Catherine to stand. She is what we call a long hauler. So I know there is a lot of frustrated people because it definitely gets a lot of frustrated people in the room tonight because of the process. But I have to say that she's my hero because she started working on this decades ago, not months ago or weeks ago, but decades ago. By the same token, I've been working as my background in voting rights for about 30 years, started as an Ohio University student activist and student government president all the way through my work in Ohio, registering voters and then my 17 years with the NAACP as the director of the National Voter Registration.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [03:03:48] We didn't want you to talk a long time.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [03:03:50] It's not long [laughter] I'm only making a comment about how long it takes to get stuff done. And my point to you is that I know there are two things we have going on in this room. One is a lot of pessimism and then there's some optimism up front and some in the back, and then there's hope and then there's reality. The reality is that people have seen this before. They've seen it come crashing down and they've seen this not work out. They've seen everybody revert back to the partisan nature of what has happened in this state for several cycles. But everything I've heard tonight and you've heard tonight are the modifications among the people who know this area the best. I can't add anything to it or subtract from it. They know what needs to be done for these matters. I'm assuming what we're looking at now will be a part of our history of what was originally presented. But tomorrow and on Wednesday, we'll come up with something that I'm I am optimistic will be a modification of what you've done. So I think that people in this room who are frustrated, I just want to say to you that I was frustrated when we were trying to collect signatures, that we were running out of time and we did get there. And we were frustrated when I was with, I guess, Matt Huffman and yourself, Mr. Cochair, when we were trying to negotiate this at the very end with Leage of Women Voters and Common Cause and others and the NAACP. So the delays that we had with the census are real. The delays we've had with getting maps and data together is very real. But we have something that could be a model for the rest of the country. I don't think there's another model like this anywhere. So if this works, if this works, it will be something that other states would replicate. If it fails, I don't think we have to even have that conversation because if it fails, this will be reformed like it was before and a whole new system would be put in place that doesn't involve any elected officials. So I think you've heard that tonight. I think that's a real possibility. So this would be the first time we have to do this. But I think it's also the last time we have to get it right. So that's my message tonight. Tomorrow, we'll talk about the maps. But I just want to talk about the long haulers and the importance of our keeping that a little bit of optimism, even if it's just a little mustard seed, as someone said, that's enough for me. Thank you.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [03:06:16] Thank you. Our last witness.

**Staff** [03:06:23] Reverend Seth Bridger.

**Rep. Seth Bridger** [03:06:31] Greetings and good evening to distinguished chair persons and the respective members of this commission. My name is Seth Bridger and I appreciate the opportunity to stand before you tonight. I arrived a little after four o'clock this afternoon and the three or four overflow rooms were lively and were well attended. You do need to know that. I'm representing myself as a father of two boys growing up in the state and as a husband of a wife who was also clergy. And I represent a multitude of other people, people who are working right now, others who were taking care of their children right now, others with no reliable transportation to get here tonight to this wonderful Tri-C facility, others whose health is too diminished for them to attend such a commission meeting tonight, and still others who are voiceless, marginalized by the systems in place and simply too tired of the process to care or give up their Monday evening or afternoon. I believe, as I hope that each of you do, that this process is extremely important and essential to the future of Ohio and all Ohioans, extremely important to those that this process is done with integrity and an ethic which honors the human dignity of all people. It is therefore part of my ordination vows as a member of the clergy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, to speak and to not speak for myself from the privileged position that I have had my entire life. But to use this voice in support of the marginalized, including people of color in our fine state. I currently serve the people at Messiah Lutheran Church and Fairview Park, Ohio, a first ring western suburb and part of House District 16 and Senate District 24. I currently reside in beautiful North Olmstead, Ohio. Yet I hail from the zip code of 44691 in Wooster. The gentleman referred to Wayne County Fair. You got to go. I attended college in Springfield, Ohio. Clark County. The seat of Clark County, I served in Americorps in the Linden Ave. Neighborhood in Columbus, across the interstate from Ohio State's campus for 10 months. My wife and I purchased our first home in the western hills of Cincinnati, lived in Green Township, and she and I resided in Bexley, Ohio, 43209 for several years through grad school and service in Bexley. I say all this to say this. I know the state of Ohio. I love the state of Ohio. This is not the state of Ohio. We can do better. Listen to all the people. Listen, please. I speak from great privilege, but I want you to listen to those you've heard tonight, those that you've heard across this great state. Listen to the people for what is fair and just. I also represent the Laundry Love ministry that we're part of at the church in Fairview Park, at the closest laundromat to us, we go as a congregation and love on the people at the laundromats. I've represented hundreds of people through laundry love ministry that come the last Thursday of the month to clean their laundry. And we help with that. We don't do their laundry, but we help with that and help pay for their laundry at the end of the month. You can imagine how tight it is, hundreds of people who are really struggling and want better from the representative. So I implore you, listen to the people and extension. Listen to the people. Listen the people you're hearing from this night and across Ohio. Listen to the citizens of your home district. Yes. And listen to the citizens of the whole state beyond Akron and Lima, Ohio, and other places that you have loyalties. Divest yourself, please, of party and corporations and interests to the extent of your ability. Divest yourself of your party affiliation, your corporate interests and your racial biases. I especially want to thank the lady to talk to you all down in Dayton, Ohio. I couldn't sleep last night. I was up praying for several people in our congregation, praying for this world that God so deeply loves. I couldn't sleep, so I was up at three fifteen and I found ideastream and they broadcast the commission meeting you had I think on the 25th of August down in the Dayton, Ohio area. I'm talking about the lady who came as a realtor, gave up a showing the African-American realtor mom who brought her recent high school graduate daughter to that hearing. Listen to her. Listen to countless others you've heard from today. Listen and then act, please. And I realize this redistricting process will not satisfy one hundred percent of the people. However, we must do better. It includes you, the honorable members of this commission. Listen and act, please. Thank you. Peace be with you in this process. It's not an easy process. Thank you for giving of your time and your service. I want to say one more thing about the districts. The congregation that I serve primarily pulls from Fairview Park in North Olmstead and Rocky River and Lakewood and beyond several districts. Our congregation represent about five or six of your districts here, Fairview Park and Rocky River are tied in lot of ways. I'd like you to reconsider the way thirteen and eighteen are drawn up. Please. I'll tell you, the testimony of the representative just a little bit ago about these long, narrow, skinny districts in this map. Please look at thirteen and eighteen, a district specifically. That's what I can speak to. I'm open to any questions.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [03:12:30] Questions. Thank you very much.

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [03:12:37] Yeah, thank you.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [03:12:42] OK, go ahead. Just give your name and spell it, please.

**Elliot Forhan** [03:12:49] My name is Elliot Forhan. I live on the east side of Cuyahoga County. And thank you very much to the chair. I've been here since four thirty, but I guess according to Representative Smith, my name was called before then. So thank you. Competitive districts are a bedrock of good government. When districts are competitive, elected officials are accountable to the voters because the threat of losing an election is real. A competitive district map means that the elected officials and the political parties to which they belong are accountable. That accountability is the best guarantee of good government. On the other hand, uncompetitive districts corrupt our government. Lack of competition destroys the accountability to the voters of elected officials and their parties. What incentive do government officials and the political parties have to deliver to the voters when they know that they will never lose an election? Uncompetitive districts are anathema to good government and to democracy. Incumbents in Ohio's redistricting process 10 years ago avoided competition for themselves and enacted uncompetitive district maps. And the elected institutions of government in our state, controlled by incumbents unchallenged in uncompetitive districts, have been dysfunctional and corrupt during the past decade. Ohio voters, by large margins in twenty fifteen and twenty eighteen, took action and changed the redistricting process. Notwithstanding the expressed will of the Ohio voters, the incumbents in our state are doing it again, the district maps that this commission adopted last week are similarly uncompetitive compared to the existing maps. This is an outrage and it should outrage every Ohioan. These incumbents, the leaders of our state government, are granting to themselves gold-plated job tenure. Congratulations to them. It must be nice. How can you tell that the district maps of the commission adopted are bad? According to the analytic software of the website Dave's Redistricting, the partisan lean of the proposed districts, exceeds 10 percentage points with respect to approximately 83 percent of the districts of the proposed House map and and 80 percent of the districts of the proposed Senate map. So only 17 percent of the districts of the proposed House map and only 20 percent of the districts of the proposed Senate map are competitive. Again, 17 and 20 percent competitive proposed districts. Eighty three and eighty percent uncompetitive. Outrageous. It's even worse when you consider how easy it is to create much better, more competitive maps, not to mention the maps that Mr. Glassburn introduced today. Users on Dave's redistricting can submit their own district maps, and the website software analyzes those user submitted maps automatically. Right now, on the website, user submitted maps are publicly available that compared to the maps that the commission adopted, improve on the number of competitive districts by more than 80 percent with respect to the House map and by more than one hundred and twenty five percent with respect to the Senate map. The users who submitted these maps likely did not have the resources available to them, but the commission does, yet they produced far superior maps. I'm almost finished. Ohio voters deserve so much better. They deserve a redistricting commission that enacts district maps that promote competition, not maps that insulate, protect and coddle the incumbent politicians. Members of the commission please rise to the moment, reject the district maps that you adopted, and introduce new maps with far more competitive districts. Examples of superior maps are available to you right now. Thank you very much. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [03:17:37] Thank you. That was our last witness slip. I am afraid to ask if there's anyone else, [laughter] but I'm obligated and in this position. Is there anyone else who would like to speak tonight? Is there anyone else? John Patterson?

**John Patterson** [03:18:12] I wasn't going to speak. John Patterson, a former state representative and the Patterson of Cupp-Patterson Fair School Funding Plan. Now, why do I bring that up? It took over 200 years for us as a nation to eliminate the scourge of slavery. It took well over a hundred years to give women the right to vote. And on both those issues, we are still struggling to get it right. For 30 years, almost 30 years, we have struggled to get a fair school funding formula and we still have a long way to go to get it right. And when I think about the future, and I don't know if you noticed, but there were two young boys sitting out here for over four hours. You fed them. Thank you. So well-behaved. I couldn't think about the world that they are going to inherit from us. And I want you to look around this room now and think about who will still be here 50 years from now. There won't be many, and yet 50 years from now may be the time it takes to address some of the pressing problems we face in Ohio. Things like climate change, like a 21st century excuse me, 22nd century workforce. How will we continue to mobilize and get along as a people? Those are long term problems that deserve the very talented people working together. And there are two parts of that that I want to address in a little bit greater detail. As many of you know, I spent more time working with my dear friend Bob Cupp across the aisle excuse me, Speaker Cupp, than I did with any other member in my own caucus, just working on school funding in the last term, say, for John Rogers, my roommate, because that's what it took to get this done. It takes that trust. It takes that commitment. And this is where term limits hurt us as well. We don't have time to build the trust. But the other factor is this. When we have noncompetitive districts, talented people who we need, who are not politicians but statesmen and stateswomen, sometimes don't run for office, they don't have the stomach for it. They know they don't have a chance to win. And we need all the talent we can muster to face these problems. You as a commission, we as a people, are standing on the threshold of a tomorrow for those two little boys. The decisions you make are going to impact Ohio for decades, but it rests on competitive districts. So I implore you to think about your legacy, Ohio's future and the work that we can accomplish when we work together for the greater good, regardless of party affiliation. Thank you and thank you for all your service in your time spent here. [applause]

**John Patterson** [03:22:18] Thank you, Representative Patterson. When I asked, I really didn't mean it, [laughter] and then you gave us a whole load. You know, I'm gonna ask one more time. Do we have anyone else that would like to speak. Any members of the commission, have any comments they'd like to make?

**Co-Chair Speaker Robert Cupp** [03:22:41] Going once going twice.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [03:22:42] Hearing none. No further business. We have now adjourned.