



Written Testimony
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Ohio Redistricting Commission
Opponent Testimony
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My name is Tessa Xuan, and I'm a resident of the Ohio City neighborhood in Cleveland. I serve as the statewide Co-Director of OPAWL, a statewide grassroots feminist organization that is building power with Asian, Asian American, and Pacific Islander communities in Ohio. I am here to oppose the acceptance of the proposed voting district maps, and instead I strongly support fair maps that lead to competitive political races for a robust and participatory democracy in our state.

I am a proud Ohioan, and I have lived in Ohio since my family moved here from Kentucky when I was 2 years old. During my lifetime, I have lived in 7 different counties across the state. The makeup of the current gerrymandered Statehouse does not accurately represent the state that I live in, and our districts have been skewed unfairly toward one political party. As a result, our statehouse consistently focuses 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 Ohioans care about, including addressing climate change, voting rights, immigration reform, public education, greenspace in our neighborhoods, and housing insecurity.

As an Ohioan and as a Asian American, I am still 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 unfairly steal \$1.3 billion from working families across the state, they also stood by and said nothing when dark money poured into mailers engaging in racist, xenophobic, misleading, and fear mongering tactics. This is an age-old strategy of demonizing and scapegoating foreign countries and immigrants, in order to get away with harming predominantly Black, brown, and poor communities.

When our districts are gerrymandered, races are less competitive, outcomes become predetermined, and each of our votes and voices lose power. People become less engaged in the process, and legislators have less incentive to be responsive and act in their constituents' best interests. Gerrymandering leads to more corruption and less accountability from our elected officials. Gerrymandering is why HB6 has still not been repealed.

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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 tight-knit community I live in will be split and our power will be diluted. Representational fairness should also include an effort to draw districts in such a way that the voices of minority populations are not drowned out. The current proposed map does exactly this to Asian and AAPI populations and other communities of color in Ohio. The fact that members of this commission admitted they did not even consider the importance of racial composition while drawing their maps is unacceptable and disrespectful to our communities.

These maps - and the process to date - fail to meet the promise of our reform measures and the demands of our Constitution. I ask that you please honor and protect our democracy by adopting maps that reflect the political and racial makeup of Ohio.

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