



Written Testimony

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Ohio Redistricting Commission

Opponent Testimony

Sept. 14, 2021

My name is Jona Hilario and I'm a resident of Columbus, OH. I am current statewide co-director of OPAWL. We are a statewide grassroots community of Asian and Asian American and Pacific Islander Women and non-binary people in Ohio. Our organization is a multi-ethnic, multi-generational community and we represent the diverse diaspora from Asia and the Pacific Islands.

I am here today to oppose the acceptance of the proposed voting districts and demand that this commission produce fair maps. This opportunity comes up once every ten years. The reform measure of 2015 that was overwhelmingly approved by Ohioans aimed to prohibit gerrymandering and establish representational fairness. I believe that representational fairness should 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 in Ohio.

In these last ten years, the demographics of Ohio have shifted to include a greater number of AAPI Ohioans. In Columbus, the number of AAPI residents increased by 75%. In a rapidly changing Ohio, we need fair representation so that our communities can survive and thrive. As our numbers grow, our political concerns grow with us, and we are eager to contribute to the political landscape of Ohio.

Earlier this year I along with many Asian and AAPI leaders appealed to the Senate finance committee to ask for the creation of an Ohio AAPI commission and Office of AAPI affairs. We asked our state leaders to show our communities that our state government sees what our community has been through in the past 20 months

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where acts of racist violence towards our community have massively increased due to racist rhetoric arising after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. We were assured by members of the committee that they support our communities. However our modest request to fund these offices for less than \$500k out of the \$75 B state budget was denied. We were told it was denied due to an unwillingness by Ohio State Senate leaders to fund efforts that address “racial issues”.

Our communities deserve fair representation so that our concerns are addressed within the state legislative body. The current proposed map from this commission demonstrates why our appeal for help fell on deaf ears. Our communities are being cracked and diluted. A case in point is the current proposed State Senate District 16 (Figure 1 and 2) where Dublin, a city where 1 in 5 residents are Asian or Asian-American is in the same district as Marysville that has less than 3% AAPIs. A more fair map as can be seen in this fair map competition winner has Dublin sharing a representative with other cities and towns that also have sizeable AAPI populations like Worthington, Westerville or Gahanna.

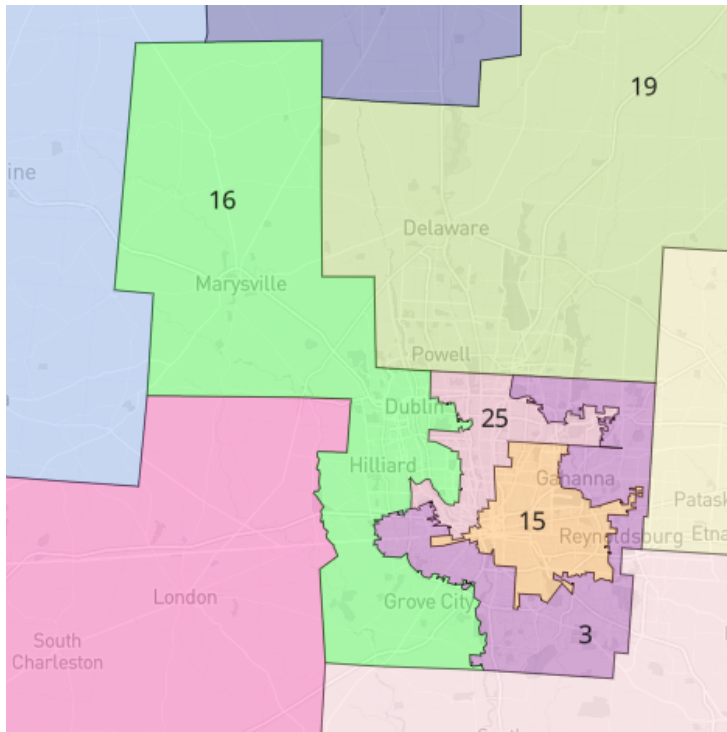
The current Commission proposed maps does not reflect the increase in political power representation that our communities should be holding that’s proportional to the increase in our population. This is not just limited to the Asian and AAPI populations but is also the case with other Black and Brown communities in Ohio. That members of this commission have stated that they did not examine the racial composition while drawing this map is unacceptable and disrespectful to our communities. Our communities deserve better than what has been presented by this Commission.

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Figure 1. Commission proposed State Senate District 16



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Figure 2. AAPI populations overlay

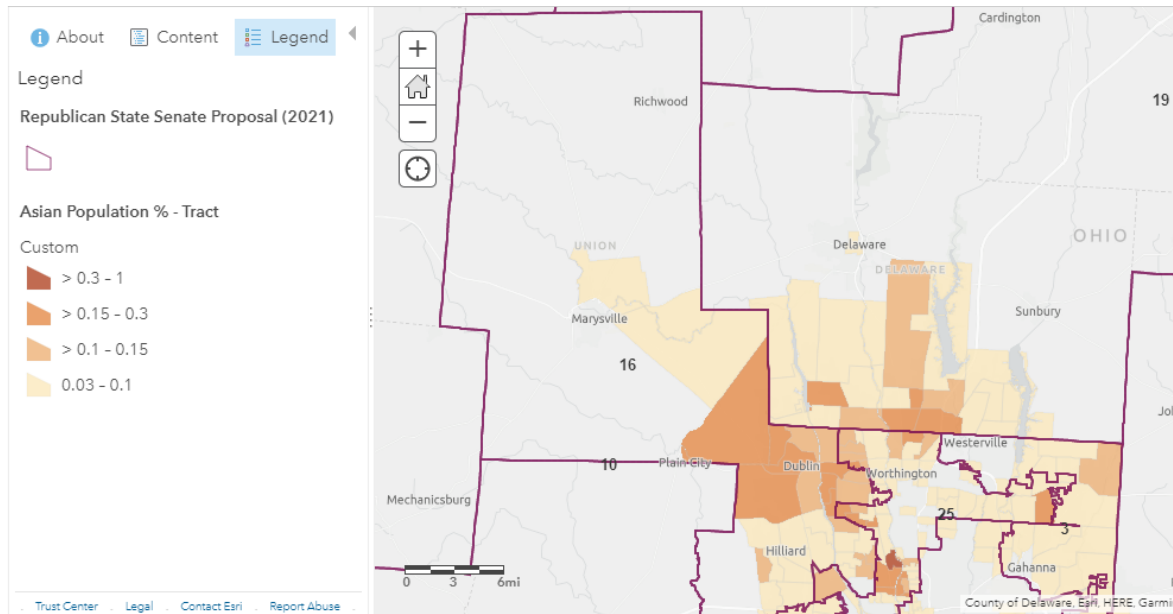


Figure 3. Fair map Competition winner

