

PROPONENT TESTIMONY OF:

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IN SUPPORT OF:

REDISTRICTING OF OHIO STATE CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICTS

REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE

Testimony

Gahanna, OH, August 23, 2021

My name is Mary Dixon and I live in Gahanna, Ohio House District 19 and Senate District 3. I believe that we need a fair and transparent process for redistricting our state legislative districts. Such a process should include robust public involvement which includes in person and written testimony as well as submission of proposed maps drawn by citizens.

I have personally experienced how the current map has led to my previous state senator being unresponsive to my concerns about gun safety. This is an issue about which I care deeply. I made an appointment and visited this senator personally. The response I received was basically a nod. Nothing was done or said during the visit that led me to believe he would take any kind of action and there was no follow up. This is although most Ohioans want gun safety legislation. I believe this lack of responsiveness is due to the gerrymandering in our districts. Elected officials do not feel they have a commitment to voters because their districts are so diverse, they are not sure what voters want.

In preparation for this testimony, I looked up the map of District 19. According to 2010 census information (I was unable to access the current 2020 numbers), District 19 had a population of 157,070 people. The average number of people per district in Ohio is 116,530. In addition, the district is extremely gerrymandered on the northwest border, with 3 separate strips of land on that side appearing as additional add-ons, cutting sections out of Districts 22 and 25. Furthermore, on the east side of Gahanna, Jefferson Township becomes part of District 21 which is largely Licking County. Students residing in Jefferson Township attend Gahanna schools and the community largely identifies with Gahanna yet they are in a different state congressional district. There are four different school districts in District 19, one fine arts center at one end of the district, and one university at the other end. There is very little in the middle. In sum, this is a large and diverse territory with so many various needs and interests that it makes it difficult for one person to represent it. We need a map that better represents our community.

To be fair and equal the Redistricting Committee needs to follow the outlined rules, in particular:

1. Adhering to the federal population regulations.
2. Splitting no more than one city per district.
3. Drawing a plan where party alignment corresponds to statewide preferences.

Ohioans overwhelmingly want fair maps that accurately reflect and represent our population. Please fulfill the promise of the redistricting reforms placed into the Ohio Constitution. Doing so, would help make our state safer and better represented.

Mary Dixon, Ph.D.