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Mike Pniewski, P.E., P.S.
County Engineer

August 26, 2021

The Honorable Speaker Robert R. Cupp, Co-Chair
The Honorable Senator Vernon Sykes, Co-Chair
Ohio Redistricting Commission

Co-Chair Cupp, Co-Chair Sykes and the Members of the Ohio Redistricting Commission:

I am Mike Pniewski and am the elected Lucas County Engineer. I appreciate the opportunity to deliver testimony to you today.

Since the Reconstruction era, gerrymandering has been used to minimize the impact of the votes of different classes of people. Through the strategies of "cracking", which intentionally spreads voters of different races and interests out amongst multiple districts in order to dilute their political voice, and "packing", which intentionally concentrates voters of different races and interests into one district in order to restrict their influence. As a result, the drawing of districts has been a harmful political tool. With the advent of higher order analytical tools, these strategies have reached a position that it is poisoning our political discourse to the point that government is failing to reflect the needs and desires of the majority of the population. Instead, government is increasing reflecting the desires of a small, extreme minority.

District lines that ignore local community boundaries or affinities can result in elected representation that is not reflective of the priorities or needs of the majority of the community. In order to avoid the continued damage that gerrymandering has caused in Ohio, it is important that the Commission uses this once-in-a decade opportunity to draw districts for the Ohio House of Representatives and Ohio Senate to ensure fair and accurate representation for all of its residents.

To that end, while events such as these are helpful in providing the Commission valuable input while they make their important decisions, I request the Commission to increase their outreach to the citizens of Ohio regarding its work. All communities much be made aware of all further hearings, map-drawing workshops, and listening sessions. In addition, more hearing must be held after the draft maps are created to gather as much impact as possible on the impact these districts will have on the citizens of Ohio. A targeted and robust public information campaign must be a centerpiece of this outreach strategy.

Lastly, I call on our fellow residents and citizens of Ohio and those present here today to play their part in informing their neighbors about the impacts of redistricting and this process, especially my fellow elected officials, community and religious leaders that have strong relationships with their fellow citizens. The stakes are too high for Ohioans to be left unengaged. Our great state cannot undertake another decade where a radical few have taken over the ability to create policy that impacts all of us. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours very truly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mike Pniewski".

Mike Pniewski, P.E., P.S.
Lucas County Engineer