**Ohio Redistricting Commission - 8-26-2021 - Toledo**

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**Co-chair Sen. Vernon Sykes** [00:00:00] Ohio Redistricting Commission. We really appreciate the input, we've... This is 1 of 10 hearings that we're having around the state and we certainly appreciate your input and look forward to it. We would like to thank the library for hosting us here and we'd like to get greetings... Receive greetings from the library director, Jason Kucsma.

**Kucsma** [00:00:28] Welcome. [applause].

**Co-chair Sen. Vernon Sykes** [00:00:28] And we would like everybody to be as brief as that, please. [laughter] OK. Will staff please call the roll.

**Clerk** [00:00:57] Yes sir. Co-chair Vernon Sykes (present) Representative James Hoops, designee for Robert Cupp (here). Matt Donahue, designee for Governor Mike DeWine (present). Auditor Keith Faber (present) Chris Oliveti, designee for Secretary Frank LaRose (here) Representative Paula Hicks-Hudson, designee for Leader Emilia Sykes (present) [applause] and Senator Teresa Gavarone, designee for President Matt Huffman (here). Tank you. That concludes the roll call.

**Co-chair Sen. Vernon Sykes** [00:01:31] With a quorum being present, we will move to continue the meeting and open up the regional hearing here in Toledo. At this time, I'd like to recognize some other state elected officials here with Leader Emilia Sykes [applause] Leader Ken Yuko. [applause] Representative Sheehy. [applause] Representative Sobecki [applause] and Senator Fedor [applause]. Thank you for your attendance. For those who would like to testify, we ask that you complete a witness slip for our records and that can be obtained at the desk, at the front door. In November of 2015, Ohio voters approved the constitutional amendment, which implemented a new General Assembly redistricting process and established the Ohio Redistricting Commission. The commission consists of the governor, the state auditor, secretary of state and one commissioner appointed by each of the legislative leaders of two of the largest political parties of the Ohio House and Senate, four in total, one from each each caucus. The commission has until September the 1st to pass a plan with the votes that are by bipartisan votes. It has... If it fails, it has until September 15 to pass a plan with just a simple majority. The redistricting process is done every 10 years in conjunction with the census. When we are able to identify the population totals here in the state of Ohio for the 2020 census, there was 11,779,448 people in the state of Ohio. That would mean that each of the 99 House districts should have 119,186 persons, and the 33 Senate districts should have 357,559 persons with a 5% deviation up or down. As you all know, this is a complex and complicated process, which includes a lot of rules and guidelines. We don't want to go over those right now, but they can be obtained from the website that we have for the commission. But some of the considerations for fair districts would be representation of fairness, district population requirements and permissible population deviations, rules on how to prioritize splits of political subdivisions and additional district standards regarding favoring or disfavoring political parties and compactness of districts. We also have to comply with the Ohio Constitution and all applicable federal laws, including the Voter Rights Act. We have... You will, please make note that this is being recorded and is being broadcast on the Ohio Channel, the website where you can actually get additional information about this hearing and other hearings that we may schedule, as well as submit written testimony and also submit plans can be reached at www.redistricting.ohio.gov. This hearing, since we have a September 1 deadline for the state legislative districts, we are focusing mostly on state legislative districts. So we hope that you would curtail your, or limit your comments, focus your comments on state legislative districts. Are there any questions of any members at this time? We have a long list of people that would like to testify here today. We've learned that about four minutes is usually enough time to help us help you get your point across. We will be having a time keeper who will indicate when you have one minute left and when you need to wrap it up, we won't interrupt you, but we're hoping you will comply with the time, the time frame with that. The first witness will be Nancy Larson.

**Larson** [00:06:45] Everyone, I live in Sylvania and I ran for state representative of District 47. I did that because I felt like the person who was supposed to be my representative was not paying attention at all to the constituents in that district. It is mostly Fulton County with Swanton as a carveout. One of the proposals that I would like to suggest is put Swanton back into Fulton County. It's maybe 42,000 people in all of Fulton County. I saw no reason for Swanton to have been not, not included with its geographic area. This process, in order to be fair, needs to result in 45% of the districts being democratically favored by state and federal partisan general elections. That is not a mandate, but that is the intent of the ballot issue that I worked as a League of Women Voters person to get past. If it results in something less than that and we continue to have a supermajority of Republicans in the statehouse that will not be fair districts. That will not be fair representation. So when this is all said and done, one of the specifications that this committee is supposed to try to achieve is a district drawing that represents the people, and that is not 66% Republican. That is 52 to 55 percent at most. And I personally am sick of being in a state where 48%, maybe 45% of the Democrats have no voice and the people that are at the statehouse can ignore what it is that we want, whether it's on gun control, whether it is on women's rights, whatever it is, and they can get elected because of the gerrymandering. It needs to stop. And it's your job to fix that and to fix it correctly. So I ask you, when this is all said and done, if fifty... 45% of those districts that are drawn are not ones that have had a Democratic leaning representation in the partisan vote, then you will not have done your job. Please make it fair. Thank you. [applause]

**Co-chair Sen. Vernon Sykes** [00:09:17] Any questions? Seeing none, thank you very much. [appluse] I'd like to ask for forgiveness and advance for any stumbling I may make over some names. It's not intentional. And for the record, if you would please restate your name and where you're from so that we'll have some general information about you. OK, the next person is Alexii Collins. Gene Redinger.

**Redinger** [00:10:12] Hi, everyone, I'm Gene Redinger, I'm from Williams County. I'm here to testify about intergovernal units. I just spoke to most of you all in Lima, but I want to restate the value provided to me Four County Career Center, which represents Williams, Henry, Defiance and Fulton County. Without Four County, I probably would have never met my wife. Another intergovernal service is, CCNO. Luckily I've never been there myself. But it does provide a legalized slave labor that provides recycling service for my city and landscaping services for my neighboring city. Lucas County is no longer part of CCNO as of 2019, if I remember correctly. My next point is regarding health care. A member of my community recently had a stroke. He was life flighted to Fort Wayne rather than Toledo. And my final point is media markets. While Williams County Radio gets Michigan and Indiana public radio stations, our main radio station, our main public radio station is from Toledo. However, just a bit south in Defiance... or just south of Defiance in Paulding County, the local news stations are from Fort Wayne for some reason. Interestingly enough, here in Ohio. I mainly want to cover those points because I think I covered the fair districts well enough in Lima. I think that we do need fair districts here in Ohio. It's pretty sad that we're so gerrymandered. I mean, the snake on the lake needs to go away. There's no doubt about that. I mean, the duck needs to go away. I thank all the people here for being here, it's great to see so many people, so many people active in civic... in doing their civic duty. That's all that I had to say. Thanks. [applause]

**Co-chair Sen. Vernon Sykes** [00:12:06] Are there any questions. Thank you. Kathleen Helbling.

**Speaker 4** [00:12:41] Hello, my name is Kathleen Helbling and throughout my life, I've lived in many states throughout the United States. And 22 years ago I moved to Ohio. My dream for this state is that representatives will enact laws that will appeal to all citizens of the state. That will only happen, however, if elected officials are moderates who are able to talk to and sympathize with members of both parties. That means that, well, it so happens that this seldom happens in Ohio because the state is so heavily gerrymandered, that means that politicians in safe districts can have very extreme views one way, either liberal or conservative and still get elected, then the politicians only need to appeal to one party. I think all of you already know this. I've seen that happen over and over in Ohio, and it doesn't seem like democracy to me. It is one party often dictating policy for the state and opposition feels completely irrelevant. So I'm depending on you to remedy this as best you can so that people like me no longer feel disenfranchis[[ed. Thank you.

**Co-chair Sen. Vernon Sykes** [00:14:20] Any questions? [applause] Thank you, Anesa Miller.

**Speaker 5** [00:14:50] My name is Anesa Miller. I've lived in Bowling Green, Ohio, for 36 years, I love BG and one of the things that made me very happy was when our city government invited residents to take part in a green energy project in support of the brand new wind turbines that were installed. I believe it was in 2003. My late husband and I decided that we would pay the small monthly fee to join this program. I recently received a sweet little decal from the city of Bowling Green. I'm sorry you can't see it, of course. But this is thanks to me. For the 18 years that I've been purchasing clean wind energy. You may know that July 2021 was the hottest month ever recorded, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. And apocalyptic heat wave in the Pacific Northwest that killed an estimated 600 people is impacting me personally. As my elderly brother has decided. He cannot continue to live in Scappoose, Oregon, and is now coming to stay with me in Bowling Green. He may be one of our first climate refugees, but I am prouder than ever that my adopted hometown is a leader in clean and renewable energy. So please understand that it came as a slap in the face to many in BG when our Statehouse representative and senator both voted in favor of the notorious HB 6 in 2019, which subsidized nuclear and coal power plants. And here I quote Cleveland.com, effectively gutting green energy mandates. This year, they both voted in favor of SB 52 and HB 118, which renewable energy companies have said create an extra hurdle for getting new technologies up and running while adding disincentives to investment. I believe the current shape of our districts contributes to this attitude of disregard for constituents concerns on the part of officials who should represent us in Columbus. It is my understanding that genuine competition for citizens votes only occurs in primary elections, allowing candidates to cater to the views of the most engaged base voters and perhaps the most well-heeled donors. Legislators are insulated from the wishes of their own constituents who may be outside the base of their primary level supporters. It was important to me to drive 30 miles to Toledo today to do what I can to see that public participation and transparency are honored as Ohio voters have mandated. Our districts must change not only because populations have changed, but because democracy demands equitable effectiveness of all the votes. Thank you. I have written copies for the commission. [applause]

**Co-chair Sen. Vernon Sykes** [00:18:20] Thank you very much. Next person is Michael Galbraith.

**Speaker 6** [00:18:32] Mr. Chairman, I was the fifth congressional candidate for Congress in 2008. Do you want to keep the focus on state districts?

**Co-chair Sen. Vernon Sykes** [00:18:41] Yes.

[00:18:41] Should I read my notes?

**Co-chair Sen. Vernon Sykes** [00:18:48] Take your time. As long as it's four minutes or less. [laughter] On deck will be Marissa Bramble on deck. Yes, please.

**Galbraith** [00:19:26] As the chairman said, as Michael Galbraith, I was the candidate for Congress in the 5th Congressional District in 2018. Excuse me, and as such, I was partially following in my father's footsteps who served as a Republican in the Ohio Statehouse from 1967 to 1986. For much of the time when my father was in office, Democrats controlled both chambers in Columbus, the result of Democratic gerrymandering during some of that time. However, the governor's mansion was occupied by a Republican in most of that time. After the 2010 census was published in 2011 and now that Republicans control the layout of the districting map, the carving out of Ohio state Senate and state representatives districts gave new meaning to the term gerrymandering. Any semblance of rational and or fair districting at any level was simply thrown out the window. This is in a state which for decades had voted only a few points, either side of 50% for most statewide candidates. In 2015 and again in 2018, the voters of Ohio demanded by large majorities, and this is thanks to the effort primarily, I would say, of the League of Women Voters, demanded by large majorities to end these irrational carve outs and demand that state and federal districts in our state of Ohio be drawn in a rational and coherent fashion by an independent commission. When I was campaigning throughout the 5th Congressional District, I found I had difficulty understanding what the farmers of Paulding County and Hardin County had in common with suburban voters in Sylvania and Perrysburg. The farmers were concerned about what commodity markets were doing. At the time commodity prices were plunging. The people of Sylvania and Perrysburg were worried about the quality of their drinking water. In a democracy, voters choose their representatives. Politicians must not be allowed to choose their voters. [applause] To that end, state and congressional districts should be drawn in a geographically rational, contiguous way where voters within those districts have common cultural and community interests. Make no mistake, what goes around comes around, and if the current level of irrational district carveouts continues, the authors will end up paying a heavy price. I just want to point out in this handout, and I'm afraid that most of you have not been able to see it. This is a projected congressional map or proposed congressional map of the state of Ohio. It was drawn up by a group of high school students at Stuyvesant High School in New York City, a group who could not be more detached or independent in their thinking. I implore the commission to think independently and rationally in their decision making. Thank you for your time. [applause]

**Co-chair Sen. Vernon Sykes** [00:23:32] Any questions? Thank you, Marissa Bramble. And on deck, Kay Chatman.

**Bramble** [00:23:56] Thank you for your time today and allowing me to speak. My name is Marissa Bramble, originally from New Jersey. I moved to Defiance, Ohio in 2013 for college. I was one of the leaders of the various Black Lives Matter protests in Defiance, Ohio, last summer. I also spent a decent amount of time educating others on systemic racism, facilitating conversations of racial injustice with community leaders and our city council. Currently, I am enrolled at BGSU as a psychology and social work major, with some career goals involving research for more efficient and ethical rehabilitative methods for our juvenile justice system, which directly impacts a majority of minorities. I say this so you can understand my background when it comes to racial issues in our country, not only ones I face day to day as a young black woman, but what I have done to attempt to create a better America for our future generations. Redistricting has been done to manipulate elections to maintain power, which tends to disproportionately affect the minority groups. Then this allows those in power to enact educational curriculum reform to benefit those in power and change the narrative. Which brings me to why I'm here today. And House Bill 327 and House Bill 322, it speaks on prohibiting divisive concepts. Many of this stems from the protests of last summer and the push to educate others fully on racial issues. If we do not teach the topics that you claim are divisive, we are actually continuing to divide our country. Everyone, especially our minorities, deserve the right to understand our country and how it was made, the importance of our pivotal moments in our history that just so happened to be surrounded by racially charged and civil rights issues. Our current curriculum is whitewashed and watered down to paint America as this perfect place, and that simply is not the case. As the philosopher George Santayana said, those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it. Our students deserve more. Our country was founded on colonization and wiping out Native Americans. Our country and economy was built on the free labor of slaves. Our country has hurt a lot of populations: minorities, children, women, the LGBTQ+ community. And our students should have the right to learn about these pivotal moments in our history and not have to wait until their 20s. They deserve to see themselves in our curriculum. There are so many minorities that have contributed to our country positively that we simply do not talk about because they are not white. You may think these are divisive concepts, but with all these topics you get the opportunity to show our students how our country fought to fix these issues and how we continue to try to fix and repair the issues of our past. America is not perfect. No person or country is but to show our nation the respect it deserves, it demands us to speak on our past that has hurt our own citizens, show how we have repaired it and continue to have the conversation, conversation to fix and repair current issues that are left over from years of oppression, suffering, pain and redistricting. Many people think critical race theory is a way to bash white people in their whiteness. That is not the case. We do not want to punish people of today for what our country did decades ago. However, we cannot ignore the fact that minorities in our country are still suffering from our past. All we ask is that we teach our students what really happened, even if the topics are difficult so our country can heal, so we can do better for the future generations. And so we do not repeat these awful things from history that we try so hard to repress. When you redistrict in an unethical way, you are threatening to strip our students of a right to a fulfilled education that represents them and those around them. It may not be comfortable and easy to talk about, but our students deserve better. Thank you. [applause]

**Co-chair Sen. Vernon Sykes** [00:27:44] Thank you. Kay Chatman. On deck, we have Dr. Regina Vincent-Williams.

**Chapman** [00:28:07] Can you hear me? Thank you for this opportunity to speak, my name is Kay Chapman, I live in Plain Township in Wood county. I'm an Ohio native, born and raised mostly in the town of Curtis and partly in Lucas County. I'm a veteran of the Ohio National Guard and I served as the animal cruelty investigator for the Wood County Humane Society for many years. I've lived here my whole life except for a few years in college, and many problems have endured as long as I remember. The Maumee River is polluted, Lake Erie is polluted, animal cruelty laws are shameful. And I see no progress towards addressing these problems. I traveled to today also from Bowling Green because I support a fair redistricting process and that should be open to the public input as required by the reforms voted into law in 2015 and 2018. You already know and other people here have or will mention that voters support those reforms overwhelmingly. I want to add my voice to those who are calling for a nonpartisan approach to the drawing of district maps. There should be no preference for any specific political party, no aim to keep anybody in or remove anyone from elected office. That must be for the voters of each district to decide. In all fairness, I believe it's when politicians have safe seats due to gerrymandering that our problems tend to get ignored like cans kicked down the road. And just want to add that from the standpoint of public input, I'm not very happy. So far, it looks like only ten hearings have been scheduled by this commission for millions of Ohio residents. I believe the times of the hearings were announced only two weeks ago and all of them are set in urban centers during business hours in the middle of the week, which makes it hard, if not impossible, for the people to get there. I really care about this issue very much. I'd like to see Ohio really, you know, get it together and start doing positive things for the people. And I do believe that it does start with marginalized people. It starts with black lives matters. We got to start doing the same... The right thing. If we want our kids to be proud of us, let's do the right thing now instead of being doing one more bad thing to be ashamed of. I just think that the voters who did this deserve to have the gerrymandering end. Please stand up for Ohio, do the right thing, give the people a fair vote. Thank you. [applause]

[00:30:43] Thank you very much. Dr. Regina Vincent-Williams. And on deck is Colin Flanagan.

**Dr. Vincent-Williams** [00:30:59] Good afternoon. It is an honor to be here and to be given the opportunity to join so many others to express our concern and the concern of our communities for fair redistricting. Not everyone is able to be here in the middle of the week and the middle of the day and also be able to drive miles and miles away from home to be heard to cause, in the words of the late John Lewis, good trouble. Good trouble is needed today when people are left out of the system. The members of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Incorporated nationwide, of which I am a member, are here to offer a collective voice for the people. I am Dr. Regina Vincent-Williams, I am a resident of Fremont, Ohio, in Sandusky County. However, as stated, I'm a member of Toledo alumni chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority. And I know you all have been introduced to some of my sisters already in the various cities, Dayton, Cincinnati and also Cleveland. As a member of Delta Sigma Theta sorority, I am the social action chair and I am chair of the Ohio cohort to speak out on redistricting and the unfairness that we have experienced in the past. I am also here to reiterate what others have said. We have partners, the NAACP, of which I am also the president of the Fremont unit of the NAACP. So I'm wearing two hats. The League of Women Voters, the Ohio, a unity coalition, common cause on the line and fair districts. In fact, we will have a town hall meeting this Saturday online on 8/28 at 10 a.m. to talk about it even further and to continue to educate the community, because a lot of people did not know that they had input into this process. Many have pleaded for fairness. They have also driven many miles from their homes to speak for those who could not speak in the middle of the week and the middle of the day and the middle of the Delta variant and the Covid-19 pandemic. As all are aware, we know that Ohio voters have already expressed their concern and their interest and have demanded that there be a fair process at this time. Yes, the process has been compressed this year due to the late release of the 2020 census data and also because of Covid-19. Of course, the numbers have dropped and we think that's from Covid-19. The current process, if followed, with good intentions, will allow for fairness for all and you all know, those of you sitting here and your colleagues, that you will be taking information back to, that we have to have compactness, preservation of communities of interest, contiguity, boundary preservation. And last but not least, as Senator Sykes has already mentioned, that there must be compliance with the Voting Rights Act. It is imperative that despite the limited time frame that we are working and sincere efforts must be put forth at all times. Bipartisan support is certainly expected. Bipartisanship support is expected. In closing, the members of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Incorporated across the nation and here in Ohio are doing our part as we represent hundreds of thousands of alumni and collegiate members. We are individually and collectively engaged in educating the community, as I said earlier, about this important process. Additionally, we are here to assist citizens across the state and having their voices heard. We encourage the community's participation through public testimony, as you all are doing here today. And I thank you all. Submission of comments on maps and mapping... The learning how to do the mapping and community education. Again, thank you for this opportunity to speak to you today. And again, of course, we expect bipartisan support and we just hope that you will do the right thing, because many people have expressed that they did not believe that this commission would do the right thing when it's all said and done. So we plead with you that you do the right thing. Thank you. [applause]

**Co-chair Sen. Vernon Sykes** [00:35:01] Thank you very much, Colin Flanagan. And on deck, Keri Russell Hartman.

**Flanagan** [00:35:24] Good afternoon. My name is Colin Flanagan, and I'm testifying in favor of fair representation for all Ohioans today. I live at 60 North Coy Road in Oregon, Ohio, and if any of you could point to my address on a map, I'd be very impressed. In fact, the reason we're all here today is because you can't do that, and I can. And a lot of people in this audience could do the same thing. I've had the pleasure been represented by Michael Sheehy for the past eight years in Ohio 46, and Teresa Fedor in Ohio's 11th state Senate district for the last couple of years and Marcy Kaptur in Congress since I was born. I'm one of the fortunate number of people in this room to be represented and to be represented, for the past decade by people who share my values. But it's because I've been drawn into Democratic votes syncs. I may have actually been entitled to Republican representation. My town and everywhere to its east voted for Trump in 2020. We need maps that represent communities of interest more strongly than anything else. The way that the reform laws in 2015 and 2018 were written and passed by Ohioans have dictated exact requirements for compactness, county and city splitting, but not requirements for proportionality and... Excuse me, communities of interest. It's no secret that the political geography of Ohio is unfavorable to Democrats because its major cities are so spread apart. If you can draw a map with fair representative proportional districts, then you ought to do so. So whare are the communities that are most similar to one another in this area? I think you would be best to start at the western section of Lucas County and work your way inward as far as many people as you can stack in it. Another thing that I'd like to say is that I think Perrysburg and whatever parts of Wood County that you can include to the north side should be included in Toledo districts. You should also do your best to keep parts... you should do your best to keep parts of the city that require, you know, their economies are are dependent on the river and the lake. You should keep those together as well. From a cultural standpoint, I think you'd be best to carve the city of Toledo into a couple different regions that you shouldn't split. Downtown, north, south, west and east. Let's keep things simple. You can divide it up along Monroe Street from downtown all the way out to wherever those people make it. When you start from the Western standpoint. This will keep you with the community of interest that thrives economically on its most natural resource, the waterfront. For the same reasons, to the east, I think it's important to put Fremont and Ballville with their neighbors to the north because the Sandusky River. East of there maintain waterfronts and other cities through Lorain County. When you draw the state Senate districts, I think you should do the same thing. I'd like to speak for a second about the impact that districts guided by community interest could have on the lake. For the better part of the decade, there has been a discussion... A discussion about runoff management reforms that could have stopped harmful algal blooms on the lake. These are common sense, best practice reforms for farmers that could improve our tourism and local investment in the area. How much of a hit is it to the image and representation of the city of Toledo that the beaches of Maumee Bay that are closed every August because the lake water is toxic? What about in August 2014, when close to half a million people didn't have drinkable water for a week? That should have been the final straw, like when the Cuyahoga River caught on fire in 1969. But instead, our districts have been drawn in a way that took emphasis away from our greatest resource, the lake, to subdue the wills of voters for partisan gain. If we had districts with preserved waterfront communities of interest, I'm nearly certain that the results of this catastrophe would have ended with action and not discussion of action. Lastly, I hope you'll take what we all said here today to heart. Every public hearing has been scheduled during awkward times of the day for working people. If you look around this room right now, it's about 90 percent white. That does not reflect the diversity of this region. Additionally, I mean... two days ago, we didn't know that the meeting was going to be at the library, and I know that you've done that to try and accommodate us, but that's something that we should hash out ahead of time before the next one of these. We have some of the first state legislature maps in the country due in mere weeks, actually in a couple of days now. But this whole process to draw them was rushed and thrown to the back burner. You know, I believe Auditor Faber said a couple of days ago publicly and asked if the commission had map drawing software. Six days, there hasn't been a single meeting when the governor has shown up. This is not the time to make mistakes. The people of the state have been very vocal that they want a transparent and fair process and drawing the maps. And I hope you'll give it to them. I understand that this is your first go round with the process, but surely you can do better in the next stages. Thanks for your time today and good luck with the impossible task of trying to draw maps that make everybody happy. Thank you. [applause]

**Co-chair Sen. Vernon Sykes** [00:40:33] Are there any questions? Thank you very much. Carrie Russell Hartman. And on deck is Representative Peter Ujvagi.

**Russell Hartman** [00:40:54] Hi, my name is Carrie Russell Hartman, I live in Maumee, Ohio. I want to thank you all for coming today. I also do want to say how disappointed I am that the governor could not make it. 10 years ago, the Republican Party intentionally drew districts to make sure that Democrats could not win across the state. I live in one of those districts. I live in a Democrat held district. But it is so gerrymandered that 10 years ago they intentionally drew two state reps into the same district. At that time, it was Matt Szollosi and Theresa Fedor, who I think Theresa was here for a minute. But... what they did is they tried to force two suburbs into one district. Maumee, which if you are familiar with the area, Maumee is a suburb southern suburb of Toledo, and Oregon, which the gentleman who just spoke in front of me were in the same district, even though Maumee in Oregon do not even share a border. In fact, they're divided by the Mommy River. So in order to force these two suburbs with not very much in common, including a border, they drew a tiny bridge across the Maumee River. So a sliver of Toledo, both South Toledo and East Toledo, in order to force these two districts together. And they did this intentionally so they could carve out Republican votes and pad the districts to the west, Derek Merrin's seat, and pad the district to the south, Rep. Ghanbari's seat. I think this was intentional so they could create the supermajority that they have in Columbus right now. And we have seen that impact of the supermajority over the past ten years. Specifically, I have seen it in my work that I do with the city of Toledo. I used to work for former Governor Paula Hicks-Hudson, who is sitting up there. And one of the things that we spoke about nearly every day when she was in the administration is the cuts to the local government funds. And what the Republican Party has done with their supermajority down in Columbus, is they've kept all of our tax dollars in Columbus. We... We don't see any of that money, nearly any of that money that we used to see anymore. So that's why our roads haven't been able to be repaved here in Toledo. That's why our infrastructure is failing. That's why our neighborhoods are blighted, because we don't get near as much local government funds that we did in the past. I truly believe this was all intentional. I blame the Republican Party for doing this because they created this power. I think they knew that they could not win if they didn't cheat. And I think we... [applause] Thank you. I'm so glad you guys are all here today. I... I last night, so my mom I brought my mom here with me. I'm kind of going off script right now. She's new to Ohio. She just moved here a year ago. We were looking over some of the other testimony last night. And honestly, I did not see one testimony written or audio that was in favor of gerrymandering. Right. I don't I don't see that. I think the only people that would be in favor are the people who are going to benefit from this power. So I just want to thank everybody here for standing up. I want to thank everybody for voting for the ballot initiatives that even got us to the point to get fairer districts. But this is so important and I just I can't say enough how disappointed the governor is not here when this is something that's so important. Thank you. [applause].

**Co-chair Sen. Vernon Sykes** [00:44:25] Thank you. Representative Peter Ujvagi. So glad to see you, my friend.

**Ujvagi** [00:44:50] And Peter, you're back. Oh, it's nice to see that quite a number of the folks that I had served with, have continued to be able to successfully maintain their great skill at being able to be both senators and members of the House and then senators again and members of the House again, in terms of...

**Co-chair Sen. Vernon Sykes** [00:45:30] I think, your time is up. [laughter]

**Ujvagi** [00:45:36] I should say that the other party does a much better job on doing that...but I'm here for a serious reason, and that is that this really is a... An important issue. Now, enough times I've been over at Tony's or at the GVI or one of the other places on High Street where we've had conversations between senators and state representatives of both political parties and they are always... When we had a discussion about redistricting, there's always a twinkle in folks' eyes about exactly what is going on and how it occurs. But the reality is this, that I think it is to the advantage of our citizens and I think to elected officials and to the credibility of public officials that this go around on redistricting be as compact districts as possible. That they be as competitive as possible. The former chairman of the local Democratic Party, you know, it's easy to say that... That you want to make districts that are winnable for one or the other political party, but I really believe that it is in the best interest of our community to have competitive districts where it's not the primary that necessarily decides who is going to be the next member of the House or next member of the Senate. Let's have that decision made by our voters and both political parties put their best foot forward and to be able to to have voters have the best candidate they possibly can. You can't say that with a straight face today. When you look at the Senate breakdown between the Republican members of the Senate and the Democratic members of the Senate, that those are competitive districts. And you can't say it by and large on the House side either, I guess I would... what I've over the years have come to describe this as political apartheid. And where people are jammed into a minimal number of districts and, you know, the other party's not going to be able to succeed in. There are some competitive districts, not many, and then you have the majority of the districts that have been put together. And I would really... I hope there is a new day. I am about as partisan, when necessary, as possible and have been in my political career. But I also know how to reach across the table and to be able to find common ground between Democrats and Republicans. And I think when there is such an imbalance, it becomes harder and harder to do that. So I think in terms of good public policy, that is in the best interest of the citizens of this state that I would hope all of you and the recommendations that come out of this process will result in... fair and balanced is not quite the word I want to use. I don't watch that station too often, but that we have as fair and balanced and as competitive districts as we possibly can for the betterment of The State of Ohio. And it's also good to see all of you. Thank you very much. [applause]

**Co-chair Sen. Vernon Sykes** [00:49:31] Thank you. Kevin Dalton. And on deck, we have Debbie Dalke.

**Dalton** [00:49:52] Good afternoon and thanks for being here this afternoon, thanks for allowing us to have an opportunity to provide some input into this process. So as you said, my name is Kevin Dalton. I'm the president of the Toledo Federation of Teachers and also the executive secretary treasurer of the Northwest Ohio AFL-CIO. For all the reasons you've heard prior to my testimony, is exactly why we need fair districts. But to further demonstrate the absurdity of what's going on right now, I'd like to add this. I live in Oregon, Ohio and North Decant Road close to Lake Erie. I'm one of the people who was put in the Ohio District 9, the snake on the lake, as some have said. So I am lucky enough to be represented by Marcy Kaptur and know folks like Representative Sheehy and others. If I lived further from the coast, I wouldn't have been. The district is used nationally as an example of the worst outcomes of gerrymandered districts, the body that makes this district felt I and my neighbors and the folks that I represent and serve should be represented by the same person in Congress as west of Cleveland. Instead of a sensible, compact district that gave us a congressional representative, a major U.S. city and surrounding area to understand and respond to its constituents issues, what we heard earlier, consolidated or compact districts.... Instead, they felt that we should be forced to represent a district that stretches over 100 noncontiguous miles across to Ohio from U.S. 23 and West Toledo, all the way across the bridge over Sandusky Bay to Jennings Parkway in Cleveland. The voters, the students, my members, my constituents in Ohio passed a measure mandating fair districts that are implemented with approval from the minority party. The voters and all the folks that I mentioned earlier deserve better than a four year map forced against against this directive. Thank you. [applause]

**Co-chair Sen. Vernon Sykes** [00:51:40] Debbie Dalke. And on deck is Paul Helbling.

**Dalke** [00:51:51] So thank you, Chairman Sykes and the rest of the redistricting commission and the substitutes for allowing me to express my concerns about redistricting. My name is Debbie Dalke. I live in Wood... in Bowling Green, which is in Wood County. Now, currently, Wood County is by itself a statehouse district. District three. I looked at the 2020 census data and it may be the case that Wood County now has too many people for one house district and so might be split. If a community must be divided into multiple districts... Districts. The people who live there should have a voice in how this will be done. My state Senate district is district 2. Now, in my opinion, this district violates two of the new rules. It does not seem compact to me, which is a requirement. The district takes a bite out of Fulton County, a bite out of Lucas County, circles around Toledo to capture Wood, Ottawa and Erie County. Erie County does not share a border with any of the other counties, which seems to violate the rule that the districts be contiguous... Contiguous. It does have a bridge. I'm a member of the Bowling Green chapter of the League of Women Voters. League members worked hard to press the redistricting reforms that you were to follow this year. These rules are in our Ohio Constitution. And as you know, it is your duty to uphold our Constitution. Partisan drawn maps weaken our democracy, and following these new rules could prevent this. I want to share one personal story to illustrate the importance of keeping districts intact. About four years ago, my mother in law suffered a potentially life ending stroke. We took her to the emergency room in Bowling Green, but the ER staff said she needed to go to a hospital in Toledo. I understand this. A small town hospital can't be equipped to handle every type of medical crisis. She went to Toledo and she survived. So this dramatically illustrates how important Toledo is to my quality of life. I want my elected officials to support policies that keep Toledo vibrant and healthy. However, none of my legislative districts include Toledo. My representatives have little incentive to advocate for Toledo. It does not make sense to me that Lakewood, Ohio, a suburb of Cleveland, is in the same congressional district as Toledo. But Bowling Green, just 25 miles away, is not. I doubt that many people in Lakewood depend upon Toledo for life-saving medical treatment as I do. I commend you for holding these hearings today. They could have been held earlier, but it's extremely important that you show us our state and congressional maps as soon as they are drawn and hold hearings to listen to our feedback. Give citizens the opportunity to tell you how those maps impact us. Be transparent and show us the maps. Thank you. [applause]

**Co-chair Sen. Vernon Sykes** [00:55:21] Thank you, Paul Helbling. And on deck, Barbara Laird.

**Helbling** [00:55:39] Hello, my name is Paul Helbling, I am a retired educator and I live in Liberty Center, Ohio. In 1999, I returned to Ohio, to accept a position with Penta Career Center. I mentioned... This return to Ohio because I have always had a global view of my country and the politics that shaped it, involvement in the world. It was when I was confronted with the question. Why are two already-elected politicians running against each other in a primary for the same seat? In my search to answer that question, I, with my global view, was introduced to partisan gerrymandering. I also this... I also saw this partisan gerrymandering as a threat to our democracy and all that I had held sacred about my country. I came to the conclusion that power and control, as a result of partisan gerrymandering, spelled dictator trends against our democracy and needed... No, I needed to address. In my correspondence with my three representatives, and looking at their voting records, and looking at the way their districts are drawn, I can only conclude that I, as an American citizen have been disenfranchized by partisan gerrymandering. My voice, my vote does not count. Because my representatives have been gerrymandered into safe districts and therefore no need to engage with voters with different visions for our communities or the need to run robust campaigns. Through the efforts of many Ohioans, you, the members of the Ohio Redistricting Committee, have an opportunity of a lifetime. An opportunity to redraw Ohio house and Senate districts so those running for office must campaign to engage with voters on the issues of those communities. And engage with your opponent in the election. Let us bring back energy and the spirit of democracy to our election cycle. All communities in Ohio to be the building blocks for redistricting, not redistricting for politicians to choose their voters. I encourage you to embrace the spirit of the reforms of 2015 and to 2018. If not for me, and if not for you, then for our grandchildren and great grandchildren and beyond. For what this commission recommends for the next 10 years will affect generations of Ohioans. I ask you to set a national example of drawing nonpartisan districts for all Ohioans. And I remind you that both redistricting reform initiatives pass overwhelmingly with over 70 percent of the vote and in all 88 counties of Ohio. That these are the people of Ohio demanding fair district for themselves and compact communities. Thank you. [applause]

**Co-chair Sen. Vernon Sykes** [01:00:17] Thank you, Robert Laird. And Maria Martin on deck

**Baird** [01:00:32] Panel, thank you for visiting our fair city of Toledo. I speak as a retired government teacher. I am also elected public official. However, that contest is nonpartisan, so I'm not going to reveal that office today. However, I wanted to make a comment that one of the principles of democracy is one man, and I'm going to change that to one person, one vote. How many of you are lawyers? Well, that's a basic legal principle from the Supreme Court. And when gerrymandering takes place, out the window with that principle. You have stacked the deck against the people's wishes. Now, let me say, gerrymandering is not an exclusive privilege of Republicans. It has also has a history in the Democratic Party. So what is the solution? Take that partisanship out of this Redistricting Commission, [applause] let's have some fair minded people. And I have to say that as an American, I've lived in China and I've lived in Dubai. And I've taught at universities in those two places. And I'm always really aware that I represent America. But redistricting, you have to do it fair to make democracy work. Thank you. [applause]

**Co-chair Sen. Vernon Sykes** [01:02:17] Thank you, Maria Martin on Nancy Gurney.

**Lasek-Martin** [01:02:27] All right, hey, ok. It's Marja Lasek-Martin, but that's OK. I'd like to thank the members of the redistricting committee for the opportunity to testify today. As I said, my name is Marja Lasek-Martin I live in the village of Ottawa Hills. By way of background, the village of Ottawa Hills was established in 1915. It's an affluent suburb of Toledo and has a population about 4500 based on the 2010 census. Most of the people living in the village are professionals, business owners or professors. It is situated in Lucas County and almost all sides of the village are encircled by the village or the city of Toledo. The village of Ottawa Hills is part of the Toledo community. However, when just when Ohio district maps were redrawn in 2010, the village was included in Ohio District 47 and Ohio Senate District 2 and split from Toledo. Specifically when drawing Ohio Senate District 2, Lucas County was split into 2 Senate districts and a part of...and a part of Lucas County that was included...included to the village of OttAwa Hills was combined with Fulton, Wood and Ottawa counties to comprise Ohio Senate District 2. Fulton, Wood and Ottawa counties are predominantly rural communities and have very different interests and priorities than the suburbs setting... Suburban and setting of Ottawa hills. A similar carveout was done for Ohio House District 47. There are a number of reasons why this is a bad idea and why these Ohio districts, as currently drawn, do not represent the interests of the residents of Ottawa Hills. First, there is no downtown area in the village of Ottawa Hills. In fact, there is only one single commercial business in the village, which I believe is an Avis drop off point. Therefore, without any commercial hub, the majority of people living in the village either make or spend their money in Toledo. People shop for groceries in Toledo rather than going 20 miles away to Bowling Green in Wood County. We use and pay for Toledo's resources. For example, the village doesn't have its own library. It uses Toledo, Lucas County... Lucas County Public Libraries. As we are here today, the village may have its own police department, but we rely on Toledo Fire and Rescue Department for its services. People remember the Toledo water crisis in 2014. Residents of the village receive their water from Toledo. Our community borders Wildwood Preserve Metro Parks and its bike paths. The metro parks are hugely popular with the residents of the village. Entertainment for the Village residents extends to the use of the Toledo Art Museum, the Toledo Zoo, restaurants, sporting events and concerts downtown. In other words, even if we live in Ottawa Hills, we work and play in Toledo. The village of Ottawa Hills is closely intertwined to Toledo and Lucas County, so much so that the village could not survive without them. This is why it doesn't make sense to have Ottawa Hill separate from the city of Toledo and Lucas County in terms of legislative representation. Thank you for your opportunity to speak with you today. [applause]

**Co-chair Sen. Vernon Sykes** [01:05:48] Thank you. Nancy Gurney. And David Karmal on deck.

**Gurney** [01:06:05] Good afternoon. My name is Nancy Gurney and I live actually in Lakeside, Ohio, in Ottawa County, 50 miles east of here, I live in House District 89, Ohio Senate District 2 and U.S. Congressional District 9. I've spoken two times with my Ohio House District 89 representative specifically about putting medical decisions into the hands of a committee and removing the medical director as a qualified decision maker. With my 40 year career and experience as an immunohematologist and lab director in blood centers where we were charged with making the blood supply safe from infectious disease. I felt qualified to speak to the issue of infectious disease spreading control. We... We disagreed, he and I disagreed. Since that time, I've contacted his office no less than a dozen times, rarely speaking in person with an aide, always asking for a callback and never, ever hearing back from my district representative. If the district was competitive, I would expect to hear back from him. Gerrymandering in Ohio has created districts that are not competitive and representatives who are not responsive to their constituents. My Ohio House district has a Lake Erie shoreline that's about one third of Lake Erie total shoreline bordering Ohio. That would make a constituent think that my representative would be active in helping the Lake Erie improve water quality. A review of House activities indicate this is not the condition. My calls to his office asking to discuss the lake go unanswered. Gerrymandering creates situations where members of Congress are not responsive. My U.S. Congressional District number 9 is one hundred miles long running from Toledo east all the way to and including Cleveland Hopkins Airport. District nine includes more than half of Lake Erie shoreline in Ohio, including all the shoreline in the Western Basin and and the Maumee watershed, the shallowest western end of the lake where most water quality problems occur. People all along there, all along the lake, make their living from the Lake Erie. They own and captain fishing boats to support sport fishing, boat sails, repair, storage, boating rescue services, Great Lakes shipping of gravel, grain and coal, lakefront resorts with shops and restaurants all employ people who depend on the water quality of Lake Erie for their livelihood. The 100 mile stretch of lakefront is in the district of one U.S. congressional representative whose voice is diluted by gerrymandering. The district is not compact. So instead of multiple congressional districts, voices and districts calling for improvements to Lake Erie, gerrymandering shuts the message down to one voice. Lake Erie as an enormously valuable asset to Ohio, not just a District 9, but to all of Ohio. Gerrymandering is not good for Lake Erie or the many businesses or the people who live along it. Ohio wants districts that are compact, contiguous and competitive. Won't you do your part to end gerrymandering in Ohio? I ask you, please. Thank you. [applause]

**Co-chair Sen. Vernon Sykes** [01:09:54] Thank you. David Karmol and Edward Singer on deck.

**Karmol** [01:10:13] Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the commission, and we do appreciate you being here in Toledo. I am David Karmol. I'm chairman of Lucas County Board of Elections, but I'm not speaking on behalf of the Board of Elections. I'm speaking as an interested citizen. But let me just say this. As a Board of elections member, I really do hope that you folks on the commission can complete your work in a timely manner, can deliver maps to the various board of elections so that we can do our job notifying the voters of the districts and, you know, preparing for the elections in 2022. It's very important to us that this work be done, that it be hopefully done in a bipartisan manner so that we are not tied up with legal appeals for years to come. The other thing I wanted to say is that I, too, am a former member of the General Assembly. I served with Michael Galbraith's father John Galbraith, who is now 92 years old [98]. Oh, I'm sorry. Excuse me. Anyway, John, in 1982, after the census of 1981, I was a Republican member of the legislature serving the West Toledo district and the Democrats controlled redistricting that year. And my district, which was a competitive district, created as a competitive district in '72, was split into five pieces, four of which were given to the Democrats that surrounded me. And one part was given to John Galbaith, the the area where I lived. So I did not run against John because I appreciated his his leadership. But anyway, I would concur with those who have said this is not just a Republican thing. Democrats have also gerrymandered these districts. Finally, I just want to say I do have confidence under the statutory and constitutional framework that the citizens of Ohio passed, that this commission will follow those guidelines and will create districts that meet those criteria. And if they do, they will serve the voters of Ohio well. So thank you for your service and thank you for being here. [applause]

**Co-chair Sen. Vernon Sykes** [01:12:37] Thank you. Edward Singer. And Susan Muenzer on deck.

**Singer** [01:12:53] I want to thank you for this opportunity to testify. I have copies here for each of you.

**Clerk** [01:13:07] It's the same thing as you submitted online?

**Singer** [01:13:15] I am Ed Singer, 31 years the lead social science instructor at Northwest State Community College. My experience as an educator convinces me of the direct links between fairly drawn and electoral maps, a strong civic education and the future of our democracy. I am alarmed by legislation crafted by a supermajority in the statehouse that appears ready to eliminate free inquiry in the classroom. Specifically, I'm worried about pending House Bills 322 and 327. If enacted, these measures would prohibit the teaching and learning of a wide swath of ideas about America's past and present. What ideas? Honest truths about the promise of an America with freedom and justice for all. Perspectives on our past and present that can help students of diverse backgrounds discover that their separate aspirations have much in common. Hope that our nation can do better against the teaching of a full reckoning of America's past and present, elected officials in Ohio attacked critical race theory with strawmen and ideological fervor. The House Bills would target concepts crucial to the teaching of social sciences. Moreover, these bills cast a prohibitive net by which much of social science curriculum could be considered suspect to prepare our students for a challenging future. The ability to understand complex ideas is essential. Spoonfeeding ideas to avoid complexity cripples students' ability to problem solve their own future. If these bills are enacted, my social science colleagues will find the academic core of their discipline censored, widely accepted ideas in the social sciences. Having a century's worth of supporting research could be seen as illegal by disgruntled students, angry parents or members of the community with an ideological ax to grind. American history is filled with inspiring examples of people empathizing with others, from conflicting groups understanding their grievances and embracing the common cause of freedom. Because Americans are capable of empathy, the views of those with different experiences are not to be debased, but rather examined in context for understanding. Legislators are not educators. With House Bill 322 and 327, legislators demonstrate their willingness to supplant the experience of professionals and replace it with ideology. [applause] This ideology tied to a homogeneous group identity crushes students opportunity to learn from our past and to prepare for a future demanding innovative thought. [applause] This ideology stifles the free exchange of ideas. It's a product of our gerrymandered districts. I hope that when those of you on the commission implement fair electoral maps, our legislators will be less inclined to bring such divisive matters to the floor. May they be more inclined to listen to constituents and colleagues across the aisle and avoid wedge issues promoted in the national media but out of place in Ohio's schools. [applause]

**Co-chair Sen. Vernon Sykes** [01:17:38] Thank you. Susan Muenzer. And Amy Cerube on deck.

**Muenzer** [01:17:56] Hello, my name is Hello, my name is Susan Mentzer and I live in Providence Township in Lucas County, Ohio, Representative District 47, Ohio Senate District 2, Ohio Congressional District 5. I love Northwest Ohio and love living in the country where my husband and I have operated a landscaping business for 47 years. I'd like to tell you a little bit about the problems we faced as a family and as Ohio business owners, because I can't help thinking there's a little bit more government could do to make life easier for us. Sometimes it seems as though there's no will and no way to accomplish things. From what I understand, one party rule like we currently have in Ohio lends itself to complacency and a failure of getting things done to help the people of the state. So I would like to see more equal representation between the parties to address a broader range of concerns than we are seeing now. One thing that makes it difficult to run a business out in the country is internet access. We desperately need broadband to operate more efficiently. I realize the new state budget allocates funds for this, which I believe will be supplemented by the Biden administration. I'm very grateful, but this has been talked about for years. And meanwhile, we are still doing reports and payroll online with constant interruptions and unreliable Internet service. During the Covid shutdown, lots of people in our township had to work remotely and everyone had huge difficulties getting online and using the sites they needed. Another major problem is health care. As small business owners, my husband and I wanted to pass our life's work on to our daughter and son-in-law. They wanted that, too. But those plans were derailed by the rising costs of insurance, deductibles and the threat of losing product... Protection for pre-existing conditions. Our daughter has multiple sclerosis and ulcerative colitis. She needs to be assured of access to care in order to be a productive member of society. This caused our family a lot of anxiety when the majority of our house, U.S. congressional delegation was planning to overturn the Affordable Care Act that brought us those protections. It was a great disappointment when our daughter and son in law were forced to the conclusion that they'd be safer switching careers and going to work for a healthcare company with reliable insurance coverage. Due to the uncertainties of running a small business, they won't be taking over our company. I have faith that if our government officials would all work together, problems like these would not be so stressful for millions of families. If voters chose our leaders and officials paid attention to all their people instead of drawing crazy-shaped districts to self-select the voters they want, I believe much more could get done for the good of everyone. Thank you very much. [applause]

**Co-chair Sen. Vernon Sykes** [01:21:56] Thank you, Amy Cerube. And Larry Clark on deck.

**Grubbe** [01:22:12] That's OK, Senator. Half the time, I can't read my own handwriting, so my name is Amy Grubbe and I'm a resident of Huron township in Erie County. And my comments this afternoon are also basically in reference to the congressional districts. It is unfortunate, however, that the governor has yet to attend any of the hearings, but have found... Has found time to attend the Cincinnati Bengals camp down there in Cincinnati for the football game. So, you know, we would really wish that he would show up at the last one. [applause] With the redistricting in 2010, a sliver of Erie County on the very southern farmland of Erie County was carved out for candidate Congressional District 4, also known as the Duck District. The rest of Erie County is in Congressional District 9. Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur's district. Just a short note that as pointed out earlier by others, Congressional District 9 is known as the snake on the lake. The district cannot be fairly represented when it goes from Toledo all the way over to Cleveland, and it includes areas such as Perkins Township here in Sandusky. And they're going up against, you know, the big towns, the big cities of Toledo and Cleveland. So Marcy's done a great job. We don't ever want to take any of that away from her, but she's done an outstanding job that we'd also like to plug that Erie County would like to remain in her district. [laughter] Personal opinion there, of course. So I have worked as a precinct poll worker in the past and have my name and on the list to work as a poll worker this upcoming election. Voters from the southern area of Erie County, have brought back their ballots when they don't see Marcy's name on the ballot. Even though it's been 10 years since the last redistricting, they still look for her name and it's... It's really discouraging to them that they just live across the street from where they should be, you know, to be within congressional District 9. And it's just a very small area that really has been carved out to be in the other guy's district. So they're very upset. They don't feel that their voice is being represented or even being heard. And, you know, he... he very rarely has any type of events, you know, where the voters can show up. Everything's closed. Everything's you know... It's all manufactured, created. You have to have a ticket this out. And the other thing and basically the same thing with House District 89, you know, we don't see that guy either. You know, we don't have any, you know, any back and forth. We don't have any open communications. Senate district 2, we really don't have that much either. You know, again, we'd like to have open communications, open meetings, open so that we can actually have, you know, good conversations about what's going on within the state. Again, the other... Just the other day, what was really discouraging, that the Hamilton County Republican Party chair posted on Twitter that he endorsed continuing gerrymandering because in his view, Ohio is a red state, end of story, end of the discussion and just continue as is. So very, very shameful that that was even posted. But he did take it down after he received all kinds of feedback. It is time to make not only Erie County whole, but other communities whole also. So we do look forward to seeing the maps that you guys come up with. Thank you.

**Co-chair Sen. Vernon Sykes** [01:26:29] Thank you. Larry Clark and Beverly Gottleib.

**Clark** [01:26:41] Good afternoon, I am Larry Clark, resident of City of Toledo. I'm pastor of Monroe Street United Methodist Church. I earned my Ph.D. in sociology from Bowling Green State University. I root for the Toledo Rockets where I live. [laughter] I want to speak to you from both those perspectives as a pastor and as a sociologist. As a pastor, I have served churches for over 40 years across the state of Ohio. I have probably been the most liberal person in most of the churches I've served. My churches have always been diverse, however. And I believe that we were always better for the fact that we could dialogue and talk about issues from diverse points of view. Government has served much better when there is diversity of opinion and people can work together. Now, from the perspective of a sociologist. The State of Ohio is more urban than rural, over 50% of the population of the state of Ohio is found in 10 of the 88 counties. However, our legislature does not reflect that split between rural and urban. The state is overwhelmingly represented by rural and suburban interests. If we're going to move into the future as a state, that balance has to be changed. And so when these districts are drawn, they have to be drawn in such a way that urban areas are represented in proportion to the population that resides in those urban areas and so that urban voices are heard as well as the rural voices. We need to hear the rural voices, we need to hear the voices of agriculture, because it is a huge part of our economy. But we are a state of large cities as well, and they are not being represented well now. [applause] So please keep that in mind as we draw districts. Thank you.

**Co-chair Sen. Vernon Sykes** [01:29:05] Thank you. Beverley Gottlieb.

**Gottleib** [01:29:21] Thank you for holding this hearing and also thank you to the audience for being here and taking the time out of your day. My name is Beverly R. Gottlieb and I live in Sylvania, Ohio. I vote in Congressional District 5. I'm here to describe how gerrymandering has diluted my vote and the votes of others by the gerrymandering of congressional District 5 since 2010. I grew up in Toledo, Ohio, in a household with parents who discussed issues and candidates at the dinner table. My first experience of seeing and hearing a candidate was when my father took me to see Barry Goldwater at the University of Toledo. As I developed into an adult, I researched candidates and their positions on issues. I based my vote on which candidate represented my values. At 21, I attended a meeting where I heard a young Marcy Kaptur speak as a candidate for the House of Representatives. Each time a candidate ran against her, I reassessed for whom I would cast my vote. For the past 10 years. My vote has been diluted because Sylvania Township became part of Congressional District 5. Because Lucas County had been split, rural and smalltown voters overwhelmed my vote with very different interests. Furthermore, Congressional District 5 was no longer contiguous or compact. As a result, my U.S. representative was no longer Marcy Kaptur and I no longer had the opportunity to vote for her if I chose. For the past 10 years, my U.S. representative has been Bob Latta. When proposed legislation has come up, I've called his office to voice my viewpoint. Each time, I learned that he had voted the opposite way from my desire. He does not represent me or the majority of Sylvania voters who are registered as Democrats. Particularly, I was greatly disturbed when Representative Latta voted against the certification of the 2020 presidential election. [applause] I'm here today to give personal testimony on how my vote has been diminished, and I want the commission to be transparent as to the map drawing of congressional districts, as well as keep Lucas County in one continuous and compact district. Thank you very much. [applause]

**Co-chair Sen. Vernon Sykes** [01:32:39] Thank you, Erika White. And Tony Totty on deck.

**White** [01:32:59] Good afternoon. My name is Erika White, I am the president of Communication Workers of America. And why that's significant, because it's very room you're sitting in was set up by the members that I serve here at the at the library. So while we recognize [applause] I'm going to say thank you to the people that set up and when you walk out, I know you recognized Director Kuscma. I do appreciate him. Make sure you thank the workers here that set this room up and made it possible for us to be here today. I thank them for let me serve. I also serve as the vice president, the AFL-CIO. Although I stand here as one voice, I represent the voices of those who could not be here today because they are working, they are teaching, they're going to school, they are protecting our public. I want to ask as a unifying... I'm here to share a unifying message, however. We are weary from the lack of transparency and gerrymandering to create voter selection districts where representatives can easily be elected. We demand fair districts. I'm sorry.... We demand fair redistricting that will create communities where voters will actually decide who is elected, a.k.a. we select you. Because when the majority of voters cannot elect a majority of legislators, that is a failure of democracy. I state we are weary, but we ain't tired. We are demanding fair maps, representative of the state's voters, three public hearings of maps being drawn, and we want ten year maps, not four year maps [applause] Thank you. Representation comes from majority rule, which is a cornerstone of U.S. democracy and the right to vote. Elections are based on the premise that voters choose people who will represent them. Every voter, every voice, every citizen matters. We are weary, but we ain't tired. The Center of American Progress published a series of reports that analyze how partisan gerrymandering affects issues from gun violence prevention, to access to health care, to policies important to children and Ohio families. Gerrymandering hurts communities and politically red lines their best interest. It's only execute I'm sorry excludes minority groups and priority populations sometimes, sometimes even rolling back gains already made again, weary but no ways tired. Gerrymandering further distances representatives from accountability at the ballot box. But there is hope gerrymandering is fixable. Citizens across Ohio, Ohio are fired up about fair maps and redistricting. We're all here right this. That's right. They fired up all across the state. This could be the political movement to solve the problems and get our state back on track of fair representation. Let's fix it today and stop the strain of democracy together. Try to strengthen the pillars of our democracy while

**Co-chair Sen. Vernon Sykes** [01:36:04] we are weary again.

**White** [01:36:05] We are not tired because those are tired. Siegrist, those are weary. Seek resolution. Elections are based on the premise that voters choose people who will represent them by building more transparency into the redistricting process. It increases the chance that redistricting procedures will both serve the public interest and avoid the continued political party over the interests of the people in Ohio. There are multiple means to encourage public participation, and it's already started today by providing these opportunities for official testimony and encouraging the submission of personal opinions. Similarly, the public involvement must be solicited before and while a proposal for maps are being drawn. We are demanding that these three public hearings and not are in the middle of the day like today and in the middle of the week. OK, there's the three of them. We should be able to definitely have people be more part of this process and stop disenfranchizing working Ohioans who could not be here today, many who are right out there. Ohioans overwhelmingly support fair district rules for the state legislature, meaning we are saying with our voice and our vote that we will no longer live in congressional districts that are drawn to red line Ohio voters choice. No more snakes on a lake, no more ducks, lame ducks at that, no more lack of representation, no more voter selection. We are ready for fair districts in Ohio and power to the people. Thank you.

**Co-chair Sen. Vernon Sykes** [01:37:37] Thank you. Tony Totty. And Judy Harbaugh on deck.

**Totty** [01:38:07] I know you said at the beginning you wanted to focus on the state maps, but I already went to the union printer and I don't want their good work to go to waste. So sorry about that. Good afternoon. My name is Tony Totty and I'm a resident of Toledo. I'm here today to advocate for fair districting and against gerrymandering. I always wanted to see fairness in elections. I'm a union president. In my career, I won elections and I lost elections. But each race that I ran in, I knew it was fair. I couldn't imagine entering the race that I knew was going to be rigged. I'm asking you not to rig the next future elections. Gerrymandering has affected me by not letting me... The true voice of the people be heard. This affects us nationally and statewide. Our congressional district is the poster child of gerrymandering. I like my current representative, even though gerrymandering provided them to me. Other communities are being deprived of who they deserve by a disfigured electorate. The byproduct of this one party gets to implement unfair legislation because we lose representatives due to gerrymandering... This gerrymandering scheme. You look at the map that I gave you, on the left hand side, it's a representation of 2016. There's only four Democratic seats, if you look at the right side, it illustrates what a fair representative... a representative electorate would look like. There's six Democratic seats and then one up for grabs. We want fair districting because we don't want the election to be rigged against anyone. If my party was in control, I still wouldn't want gerrymandering. This country is a pendulum that swings often. Those in power today could easily be out of power tomorrow. If they aren't careful, gerrymandering will happen to them. It's not right for either side to do this, so we need to fix it now. In closing, our legislators should ask themselves, what did you get in politics for? Was it to implement the best policies for the people based on the best arguments for that policy? From that philosophy, you would get a majority rule. Or... Or was it to rig the rules so that policy can't be implemented for the people of what they want? We know both sides have politicians that would look at this opportunity and want to bend the rules in their team's favor. This is un-American, but if we allow this to happen, it'll be very American. I'm asking you to do what is morally and ethically correct, and that's not to play politics with our democracy. Thank you. [applause].

**Co-chair Sen. Vernon Sykes** [01:41:05] Yes, one question -- Mr. Totty, one question, did you submit the maps on the website as well?

**Totty** [01:41:20] Not yet, but I can.

**Co-chair Sen. Vernon Sykes** [01:41:20] OK, if you would, that would be great. Hmm, yes. Thank you. Judy Harbaugh.

**Grubbe** [01:41:28] Yes, hello, my name is Judy Harbaugh.

**Co-chair Sen. Vernon Sykes** [01:41:31] And Dorothy Singer on deck.

**Harbaugh** [01:41:38] As Senator Sykes said in the very beginning, in 2015 and 18, our state overwhelmingly passed a the idea of eliminating gerrymandering in Ohio. It passed overwhelmingly in all 88 states, 88 counties, sorry. It also based their vote on the counts that everyone was equal and that redistricting process would be handled in a transparent way. I'm here to talk to you about the prospect of every voice being handled equally. I'm especially concerned with the epidemic of gun violence in our state and in Toledo. There are many layers of gun violence that can be addressed. But research shows overwhelmingly that common sense gun laws, not gun control, but common sense gun laws, can make a difference in keeping our community safety. It is not a Second Amendment right. It is a safety issue that I'm speaking to. [applause] There have been bills in the last year presented in Columbus that would make our cities safer for citizens and safer for our police officers to do their job. Some of these bills do not even get out of committee or receive a hearing in committee. However, there have been dangerous bills. An example is Stand Your Ground proposed by police chiefs in seven major cities in Ohio, Toledo included, and with testimony written and spoken against by over 240 citizens on several occasions. This bill was delayed but then snuck in during lame duck session. Ask many communities of color and they will say this is the most dangerous bill that affects them. [applause] Sadly, this bill was only supported by the sponsor of the bill and very few other people, not overwhelmingly. We know that when 90 percent of our citizens in Ohio are asking for common sense gun laws to make our communities safer and our... Lawmakers are not hearing them, it is time for permanent change. I implore this group, along with everyone that's been speaking today, to bring back a fair district system where every vote counts equally. Thank you. [applause]

**Co-chair Sen. Vernon Sykes** [01:44:58] Thank you, Dorothy Singer. And on deck, a student of mine, Trevor Martin.

**White** [01:45:22] Hello, my name is Dorothy Singer, I'm a resident of Defiance County. I am a wife, parent, grandparent, community volunteer and a former program director for OSU extension. I realize education funding has been a challenging issue for our state for many years. I believe that unfair representation caused by gerrymandering serves only to further cloud this complex issue. I recently read on the Fordham Institute website praise of the latest budget bill for addressing matters of school funding. The article states the new state budget greatly bolsters Ohio's school choice options. The article described several position... Provisions benefiting charter schools and private school scholarship programs. When 90% of Ohio's schoolchildren attend local public schools, I am left wondering at the underlying ideology of the Fordham Institute's praise for school choice. In our very rural school district, Central Local Schools, where we raised our children the closest private schooling was available only through grade eight. For our family of six, that would have meant a commute, favoring one child over the others and less time to take care of our aging parents. Public schools are the most convenient educational choice for rural residents. They also strengthen community connections. When our sons arrived his first year students at the University of Notre Dame, they found that many of their peers entered with many college credits. Our sons did not have that option at their rural public school. I led the academic association at our high school for six years. Yet I felt powerless against these systemic inequalities. I found an explanation in the Ohio Capital Journal. A former state legislature states, "under one party control, you saw flat funding to public schools and massive funding to private schools and private school vouchers." His conclusion: divided government gets you more state funding for public schools. Is it fair that our government, dominated by one party, aims to prioritize 10% of the population at the expense of 90% attending public schools? [applause] Voters in gerrymandered districts are effectively silenced. Representatives have little motivation to listen to voter concerns, but can easily fall prey to moneyed interests. The First Energy bribery scandal points to the danger of this type of representation. I urge you to draw our new district maps fairly so that representatives will find it in their interest to hear the voices of the people. Thank you. [applause]

**Co-chair Sen. Vernon Sykes** [01:49:09] Thank you, Trevor Martin, and on deck, Mike Pniewski.

**Martin** [01:49:22] Well, thank you, Senator, for that shout out, I want to say real quickly, I still give credit and I thank Senator Sykes for his guidance in education and leading me to to what I do today. Thank you, Senator. Thank you, rests of the committee members for having us here today and hearing some public input. I was... My name is Trevor Martin. I use he/him pronouns. I was born in Findlay, Ohio, born and raised. I went to Kent State University for my undergrad, lived up here in Toledo, down in Dayton. And I currently live in Columbus, Ohio, with my wife and my one-year- old daughter. And I've been around Ohio, both in my lived experience and my... The work that I do as a community organizer and activist. And I see the different communities throughout Ohio with the, you know, different ideologies and backgrounds and beliefs. But there's one thing that we all came together, I know for sure, and that in 2015 and 2018, we voted for fair districts and fair maps. And I've been to a few hearings now throughout the state and I see the level of enthusiasm and engagement that folks have and like, thrills me to my bones, being a community organizer, to see folks getting involved. And I would think that you all would encourage involvement and public participation. And that's what I'd like to talk to you today, is that, you know, although there's been encouragement of public participation, there really hasn't been any follow through and action. The website that you keep referring to and directing people to was only released last week, three days, maybe, before the first hearing on Monday. And I honestly doubt that any of you could go to that website and figure out how to create a public map to submit ,that you're asking for. You know, what... what software do you use? You know, where's the tutorials? How do you make one? You know, what makes a good and eligible map? How do you save and submit? And I'll take challenges, if any of you can do this. You know, I've trained over 75 people in the Fair Districts coalition to to create community maps on the district... Your software. And, you know, when you go to the Web, it says, you know, save as a PDF and send it as a zip. And I'm telling you, look, you need better instructions than that. And the people... They don't know what the hell you're talking about when you when you when you say that. [applause] And their website should have been up months ago. These, you know, these hearings should have been announced months ago. You should have been taking public participation and input months ago. You know, there's no leaks on this on the website to the actual software that you're creating maps, there's no tutorials. And all this is free. You know, there's free public software that's available to anybody. Like why aren't Link... The Ohio Citizens Redistricting Commission has links to the districting software on their website. And you can bring up the maps that folks have submitted and you can see, you know, the partisan index and the demographics of these maps that they're submitting. You're asking them to send PDFs of a, of a shape. What are we looking at? A shape. It has nothing that we need to make valuable, useful maps. I mean, Fair Districts of Ohio would be happy to to work with you. You know, again, I've trained... I've got folks calling me asking how to submit a map to your website. [applause] All right. So I'm just asking a couple of things in the maps. They don't have partisan indexing. We need you know... Maybe I'm not... and I'm not even a tech guy, I'm not a data guy, I'm not a code guy. But we need, like, CSV files that show the partisan indexing of these maps, the demographics. I mean, we're talking about the Voter Rights Act. You know, we need to make sure District 11 is minority, majority, district... You know where I live. You know, it's a it's an opportunity district. We need to make sure, you know, that minority voices are fairly represented. We can't do that with a PDF. And then finally, you know... links. Yes, links to the software, There's Districtr, there's Dave's Redistricting Too, there's District Builder, you know, there's Representable... There needs to be links on your website. And then all of these software folks have tutorials. And MGGG with Districtr was doing their own trainings once a week. Why weren't you directing folks to, to them so that they could create a community map or a district map and submit to you? So this is my formal request. I'm asking you to do that. Thank you. [applause]

**Co-chair Sen. Vernon Sykes** [01:54:22] Thank you. Mike Pniewski and Robert Walden on deck.

**Pniewski** [01:54:35] Afternoon, thank you to you, Chairman Sykes and the rest of the members of the Ohio Redistricting Commission. My name is Mike Pniewski and I'm the elected Lucas County Engineer. It's very nice to see good friends and colleagues up on the dais today. Senator Gavarone and Representative Hoops and Hicks-Hudson, it's good to see you and thank you for your service today. And it's always great to see you here. 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 intense... 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 become a harmful political tool. With the advent of higher order analytical tools, these strategies have reached a position that 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 increasingly reflecting the desire of small, extreme minorities. District lines that the low local community boundaries are 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's important that the commission uses this once-in-a-decade opportunity to draw districts for the Ohio House of Representatives in 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 must be made aware of all further hearings, map drawing workshops and listening sessions. In addition, more hearings must be held after the draft maps are created to gather as much impact as possible [applause] on the impact these districts will have on our citizens. Our 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 especially those present here today, to play their part in informing their neighbors about the impacts of redistricting and this process, especially to 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 over... have taken over the ability to create policy that impacts all of us. Thank you for your time and for your consideration. [applause]

**Co-chair Sen. Vernon Sykes** [01:57:56] Thank you very much, Robert Walden.

**Walden** [01:58:07] That afternoon, Robert Walden from Toledo, Ohio. I apologize... I thought I was going to do this electronically and as I got here, I can no longer pull up my presentation. I'm going to give it from my notes. OK. [laughter] So glad to see so many elected officials here. Thank you very much for participating. I'm here to voice my opposition to the makeup of the commission itself and how that is inherently an unfair situation. [applause] We have a seven member panel, which, if I understand the law correctly, five of them are Republicans and two of them are Democrats and no representation from any minor parties. And how is that supposed to be a fair situation? I mean, a fifth grader could figure out that's not fair. And so I want to know how is it, that I guess it was the best they could do at that time when they were trying to create the laws. But if you were to ask the majority of Ohio voters what they thought they were getting in 2015 or 2018, it was fair and balanced representation and map drawing. Not this idea of one person bipartisanship that we call American politics today. And that's not what we have. With full respect of the people on this panel, I get that you're trying to do the best you can do. But my contention is that we need to do better. We can do better. [applause] The way that the situation harms us with such things as we've already talked ad infinitum about snake along the lake, we get that. Do we also realize, though, that the Republicans in drawing that map in the bunker, as they called it in 2011, actually saved one of their own in southern Ohio, Hamilton County, by the same stroke, which they eliminated one of ours here in northern Ohio? So clearly, there's partisan hijinx going on, it's not just what's the best, most compact district that we can have for our citizens. Other things that don't get really played well in the media is such things as, how is it that we have lieutenant governor on that committee who is, of himself, the chief architect of the disenfranchisement movements going on in this country right now. [applause] His landmark case started what we're seeing in disenfranchisement all around the country. His Supreme Court case is the one that everybody else is using to disenfranchise voters. And yet he's on that committee. He was scheduled to speak at a True The Vote meeting, which is a right wing extremist group in intimidating minority voters. He got off of it because Rachel Maddow did an exposé on her newscast about him. But that doesn't make him a fair arbiter of this process. I request that the committee ask him to recuse and seat somebody else on this panel. He is not a fair arbiter. [applause] I'd also like to mention the fact that because we don't have fair representation on how our districts are created, we don't get fair financing as well. Every time we get shovel-ready money, and apologies to our union representatives, but there's more of us in this city than working in the unions. We need more types of jobs as well as union jobs. I crossed into the technology world years ago trying to get money that was supposedly coming from this new I.T. corridor. What happened to that? We're supposed to be having a solar and wind farm development in the city. What happened to that? And so the bottom line is the same old people get the same old money and the rest of us... do you know that Toledo, I'm sorry, Ohio, is ranked behind Mississippi in terms of economic development in the future? How is that possible? Cleveland in 2020 was supposedly the worst, poorest of the large cities in the nation. Guess who was sixth? Cincinnati. Guess who was the only state in the union that had two cities in the worst of the nation? Ohio. Now, since 1975, Republicans have held a majority of the governorships in this state. Only two administrations have been Democrat. I guess they call that a purple state. But at what point is the Republican Party going to take responsibility for the deplorable economic conditions in this state? [applause] If you're going to gerrymander it, do something with it. I would think if you got one party rule, you should be able to have us back to being the heart of it all like we used to be. And right now, I don't think we really are other than by the slogan. Thank you very much. Appreciate your time and effort. I would like to see this panel actually step up, meet the will of the people, which was a nonpartisan districting commission, maps. Thank you very much.

**Co-chair Sen. Vernon Sykes** [02:03:08] Thank you. Aaron Turner.

**Turner** [02:03:30] Hello, everyone, my name is Aaron Sharif, you call me Aaron or Sharif. I grew up here in Toledo. Uh. All right. I've been working for a while here, and I want to say I'm gonna keep it nice and short, nice and short, which is... Make the right decisions. I voted democracy... I voted for Hillary Clinton. I had the chance to vote so when I got the chance I voted Hillary Clinton and I forgot the vice president, but... It's been really hard to get housing here, and that's all I wanted to say, just like made the right decision. It's been really hard to get housing here. It's you know, like it's been like it's like... I don't know if it's all filled up to the maximum capacity, allthe housing here in the city, but it's just it's been very, very hard to get housing, even with a nice income. You know, that's all I wanted to say. But have a nice day everybody. [applause]

**Co-chair Sen. Vernon Sykes** [02:04:45] Thank you very much. Reverend John Jones.

**Rev. Jones** [02:05:08] Good afternoon to Chair Sykes and to Governor DeWine, in his absence to each member of this commission, I would first like to thank Jason Kuscma, the wonderful folks here at the library, one of our treasured institutions, for hosting this event today. Again, my name is John Jones, and I'm here today in my role as president of Hope Toledo. I'm also an ordained minister, serving under the leadership of my father, Pastor Charles E. Jones, here in Toledo, at Christian Temple Baptist Church. I'm also a proud member of Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity, and I'm the president of our local alumni chapter Alpha Xi Lambda Chapter. I reside in Senate District 11, where Senator Fedor is our senator. I'm a proud lifelong resident of Ohio's House District 44, where Representative Paula Hicks-Hudson is our representative. And I also live in obviously the 9th Congressional District, Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur, infamously known as the snake on the lake. Overwhelmingly, the constituents, your constituents in the state of Ohio, voted for this commission to be in place in order to correct and safeguard against levels of gerrymandering that impact all of Ohio's people. The redrawing of district lines based on the most recent census data is crucial for a fair, equitable, representative legislative process. It is now critical for us to do everything we can to ensure that happens. Unfortunately, when this process does not happen in a fair nonpartisan way, it has a direct and often negative impact on children, youth and families. Over 70 percent of Americans favor increased funding to expand access to early childhood education. We know that historically in Ohio, equitable resources, especially related to education, have not been allocated to all all communities. We also know that current funding for K-12 education in our state has been ruled unconstitutional. We now have a unique moment to build on the few steps of progress made in this current year's budget and move toward a place of adequate, equitable and sustainable funding for years to come. What do we know? We know that over that, nearly 90% of a child's brain development takes place between birth and five years old. Currently, more than 80% of Toledo students are entering kindergarten without the knowledge and skills necessary to learn successfully, and then they continue to lag behind in subsequent school years. What we need is a strong educational start for our children if we expect them to experience increased levels of success at third grade reading, eighth grade math, as well as graduate at higher rates and pursue post-secondary education. There's a direct correlation between the maps that are drawn and education for our kids. This educational foundation is also crucial to the earning potential of our residents across their lives. It is imperative that we develop a comprehensive, community based approach to early childhood education and care that is also fairly funded. We need to ensure the work being done by our school districts through programs like Head Start continue to positively impact our children. But also and concomitantly, we need to ensure community based providers, many of whom are small business owners, that they have the necessary support and resources to continue to deliver high quality educational experiences. Our teachers in this sector must be paid a fair and competitive wage. They also need ongoing professional development, which only increases the outcomes for our children. We must engage families in that process because we know that when parents are afforded the opportunity to be involved in their educational experiences of their child, our communities do better. We cannot allow this work and the need for high quality outcomes to be dependent on the district in which a family lives. The opportunity to do this is now, commission. We know that in order for our children who are not Republican or Democrat, for them to compete in this world, they need a strong, equitable start. We must act now. You must act now before another generation suffers. You, as a commission, have both the authority and mandate from the people of the state of Ohio to act to ensure that we properly draw these lines and in turn protect our children and young people in order to secure both their future and ours as a community. I urge you that you act with fidelity to your mission and compassion for our children and families. Thank you for your time today. [applause]

**Co-chair Sen. Vernon Sykes** [02:09:53] Thank you. With that, do we have anyone else who would like to testify? Hearing none, any members of the commission would like to make any comments. No further business to be bought before us today. We are now adjourned.