

Good Afternoon

It is an honor to be here and 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, in the middle of the day and also to be able to drive miles away from home to be heard... to cause in the words of the late John LewisGOOD TROUBLE. Good trouble is needed today when people are left out of the system. The members of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority – nationwide - uses its collective Voice for the PEOPLE.

I am Dr. Regina Vincent-Williams. I am a resident of Fremont OHIO, in Sandusky County. However I am a member of the Toledo Alumnae Chapter, where I serve as Recording Secretary, Social Action Chair, and Chair of the Ohio Cohort on Redistricting ! I am here to reiterate what has been said by Deltas across the state and others – the NAACP, the League of Women Voters, the Ohio Unity Coalition, Common Cause, On the Line, and Fair Districts as well as many private citizens who have spoken this week. Who have pleaded for Fairness. Who have also driven many miles from their homes to speak for those who could not speak in the middle of the week, in the middle of the day, in the middle of the Delta Variant-COVID 19 Pandemic.

As you are aware, Ohio voters twice voted to amend the state Constitution to adopt a more transparent and inclusive process to conduct redistricting. And while this process is compressed due to the late release of our 2020 Census data because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the members of Delta Sigma Theta believe that Ohio has the ability to develop districts that meet the demands of voters.

The goal of avoiding politically gerrymandered districts is tantamount. Ohio in the past has drawn obviously gerrymandered districts that clearly had the sole intention of assuring partisan advantage of one party or another. This happened under the control of both major political parties in the past and is not a practice that should be revisited under any circumstances. Gerrymandering allows politicians to pick voters rather than allowing voters to select their public servants.

The current process for redistricting, if followed with good intentions, will allow a fair process to achieve better and truly reflective representation. Fair districting will be achieved by the key criterion in the process: Compactness, Preserving Communities of Interest, Contiguity, Boundary Preservation, Compliance with the Voting Rights Act

It is also imperative that despite the limited time frame we are working in, deliberate efforts must be made to successfully carry out a sound process for the submission of maps by public citizens. It is also imperative that we ensure there is at least a minimal level of bipartisan support to adopt the maps. Failure to meet these objectives would represent a fundamental failure of the underlying intent of the voters' desired goals in passing past ballot/redistricting initiatives.

Finally, I would like to emphasize the need to have a majority minority district represented in the state of Ohio. As the Census data indicated, our nation continues to become more diverse. Ohio is no exception. Despite the loss of one Congressional seat, I would hope that the solution to redrawing the lines would not be at the expense of representation of a large community of interest.

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 alumnae and collegiate chapters. We are individually and collectively engaged in educating the community about this important process. Additionally we are here to assist citizens across the state in having their voices heard! We encourage the community's participation through public testimony, submission and comment on maps and community education.

Again thank you for the opportunity to SPEAK NOT JUST FOR DELTA SIGMA THETA , NOT JUST FOR TOLEDO AND LUCAS COUNTY, BUT FOR ALL OHIOANS. FAIRNESS IS SIMPLY THE RIGHT THING TO DO.

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* I am also PRESIDENT OF THE FREMONT NAACP.