

Sept 25, 2023

Thank you, Ohio Redistricting Commission, for the opportunity to testify on the maps that have been proposed for state House and Senate districts. My name is Amy Zipp and I am here reading the testimony of Susan Reis, who is unable to speak today due to her observation of the most holy day in the Jewish Calendar, Yom Kippur.

Susan is the State Policy Advocate of Ohio for National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW). She is also on the Board of NCJW/Cleveland Section and chairs their Legislative Committee. NCJW is a non-partisan, grassroots organization of volunteers and advocates who turn progressive ideals into action. Inspired by Jewish values, NCJW strives for social justice by improving the quality of life for women, children, and families and by safeguarding individual rights and freedoms. Essential to these rights and freedoms is the right to vote and to be represented by fair and constitutional districts. For over 130 years NCJW has worked to support voting rights for all Americans. The Cleveland section has over 2,000 members and supporters, they follow what the Commission and Legislature are doing, and they vote!

Recently Ohioans amended our state constitution enshrining in it fair districts. We did so to prevent a hyper partisan Redistricting Commission from drawing maps with the primary goal of protecting incumbents. Nevertheless, it was reported during the last meeting that maps were proposed that would protect incumbents. Ohioans voted overwhelmingly for a fair and transparent process. The Redistricting Commission failed these constitutional requirements in 2022 and they're failing them now. Thumbing your noses at the voters, the Ohio constitution, and the Ohio Supreme Court, the majority members of this commission have drawn and submitted maps that were deemed to be unconstitutional multiple times by the Ohio Supreme Court, and the Commission is now supporting maps that are even more gerrymandered than the current ones. This type of gerrymandering stacks the deck, whereby elected officials choose their voters, rather than voters choosing their elected officials. And with few competitive districts, Ohio legislation will continue to become more extreme and radical, and increasingly out of sync with the majority of Ohio voters. From common sense gun safety laws to school funding and reproductive choice, Ohioans' true views and opinions are sidelined as politicians in overly safe districts appease special, partisan interests. By passing fair maps that more accurately reflect our electorate, our legislators will be more accountable to the voters than such purely partisan interests.

The Ohio Citizen's Redistricting Commission's Sam Gresham, working along with other volunteers, has submitted independent, non-partisan maps that NCJW supports. These maps are truly representative of the voting make up of our diverse state and ensure that voters of all backgrounds and views have a fair shot at being represented in Columbus. We urge you to consider this map when voting on new maps for the upcoming election.

Thank you for allowing me to speak on Susan's behalf.