

**Testimony by Jaime Shatsman, Resident of Eastlake**

**Ohio Redistricting Commission**

**September 25, 2023**

**Punderson Manor Lodge & Conference Center**

Good Morning, Co-Chair Antonio, Co-Chair Faber, and members of the Ohio Redistricting Commission, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the proposed legislative maps.

My name is Jaime Shatsman and I am a resident of Eastlake, Ohio, located in Lake County. I currently serve as the Vice President and Legislative Liaison for the Willoughby-Eastlake School Board, however, any thoughts that I share today represent my personal perspective. While I make reference to my role as an elected official, my testimony is not intended as a statement from the school board. I do not have the authority to speak on behalf of the Board of Education on the topic of redistricting as we have not had a public meeting of the board since these maps were introduced last week.

In all honesty, I wasn't sure that I should come here today to speak as I am in no way an expert on legislative maps. But, I am fortunate to have a personal situation which affords me the opportunity to travel 45 minutes each way on a Monday morning with less than a week notice. And, I think it's important for this committee to hear from as many Ohio residents as possible when making a decision of this magnitude.

In preparing my written testimony, I looked at the The Ohio House of Representatives website and found this written under the heading "The Role of a Representative": *State representatives listen to the concerns of their constituents and speak for them. They develop solutions to the needs of their districts through legislative action. State representatives work together, balancing the best interests of each state district.* I often have conversations with members of my community about the importance of our local elections. And I don't mean to diminish the significance of local elected officials, especially with school boards on the ballot this November. But I think it's also important to note that while a local school board sets policy for an individual school district, school boards also have a duty to uphold the laws enacted at the state level. When it comes to education, which has been a focus for the 135<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, our State Representatives and State Senators are making decisions about fair school funding, school choice, curriculum requirements, the duties of the Ohio Department of Education or the Department of Education and Workforce as it is going to be renamed, mandatory retention practices, teacher minimum salaries, teaching eligibility, parental rights, participation in women's sports, student meals, access to feminine hygiene products, payment options at athletic events, school transportation requirements, and more. I think it's clear from this list that our State Legislature sets policies that impact our lives and the lives of our children. That's a big deal.

I teach my 8-year-old daughter that voting is a huge responsibility. I tell her that elections matter. I do that because I believe that my vote matters. I believe that everyone's vote should matter. But watching this play out, it's starting to feel like a redistricting commission has more influence over who will represent us than the actual people who are casting votes in elections.

I live in House District 23 and Senate District 18. Although prior to January 2023, Eastlake was in House District 60 and Senate District 25. We are not unique in this but, I think it's worth mentioning that

Eastlake voters did not actually elect our current State Senator because we were drawn into a new district. The same is true for our neighbors in Willowick and Willoughby who were also drawn into the new District 18 and I believe is true for other cities that were drawn into Districts depending on the way the 4 year terms of State Senators worked out. We did elect our House 23 State Representative in November 2022. Representative Troy won that election by 51% of the vote in what some news sources called the most competitive house race in the state. I looked up the R Index for that seat and it was calculated at 50.47%. When I look at the index information published in the proposed maps file where District 23 would change again, it would now have an R Index of 53.50%. I believe, by the definition of this commission, that our race is no longer considered a "toss up." Regardless of what you call it, I think it makes it less likely that we will have a middle of the road legislator representing us in a state legislature that already has a super majority.

I've heard a lot of different terms used when considering the proposed maps – proportionality, compactness, preservation of political subdivisions, preserving incumbents, and competitiveness. But here's my question: are these maps fair? Are they at least more fair than the maps that were ruled unconstitutional by the Ohio Supreme Court that we are currently using?

Why create more work for the county boards of elections by changing the maps so close to the deadline, when they just had to work extremely hard to prepare for a last-minute August election? Why open the State up to more lawsuits that could be filed challenging the constitutionality of maps that don't have bipartisan support which wastes time and money? Why assign more voters a Senator that they didn't actually elect? Why do it if the result isn't a better solution? I think most Ohioans will tell you, what I'm here to say. We want our elected officials to listen to us. That means the conversations at the State House should reflect many different points of view – they should reflect all of our voices – because the decisions made at the State House impact all of us. It shouldn't matter which party has the super majority, because in 2015 71% of voters supported an amendment to create a bipartisan commission to draw legislative districts that do not favor one political party over another. When you consider adopting maps that appear to statistically guarantee strengthening a super majority, it doesn't look fair. So I'm asking you, and I mean this with sincere respect for the difficult position you are in, if you do not truly believe we are making a change that more fairly represents the voice of Ohio voters, please don't do it.