



SPONSOR TESTIMONY OF:

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IN SUPPORT OF:

Maps proposed by the Ohio Citizens' Redistricting Commission
submitted to the Ohio Redistricting Commission

[Columbus, Ohio] Amina Barhumi, Outreach Director, Ohio Chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations
Commission Member, Ohio Citizens Redistricting Commission

Good afternoon, Co-Chair Antonio Co-Chair Faber and members of the Ohio Redistricting Commission. My name is Amina Barhumi and I am here today testifying on behalf of the Ohio Chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations – known as CAIR-Ohio. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you as a member of the Ohio Citizens Redistricting Commission to present testimony in support of our proposed unity maps.

As a civil rights and advocacy organization for Ohio Muslims – CAIR-Ohio has been working for several months to fight for fair maps.

Muslims, who are often the subject of political discourse, rarely have the opportunity to advocate for themselves. As it stands, Islamophobia, racism and xenophobia pervades our political system, leading to the creation of discriminatory policies and laws. This emphasizes the need for diverse representation among elected officials. At the very least, Muslims should have adequate representation in government that will be accessible and responsive, much less advocate for our needs.

The redistricting process is crucial to establishing proportional representation and ensuring that all Ohioans have a voice in their government. This is why Ohioans overwhelmingly voted for these reforms. Also part of these reforms was for this process to be fair, transparent, and

provide ample opportunity for public input. Thus far, we have seen this commission seriously challenge the spirit of the redistricting reforms Ohioans were promised. Fair maps come from a fair process, and we are deeply concerned that is not what has been offered to our communities.

The Ohio Citizens' Redistricting Commission has accomplished what this commission has failed to do. The OCRC has been regularly soliciting public input from across the state during biweekly meetings since May of this year with ample opportunity for public testimony. The OCRC has made a concerted effort to get perspectives from minority groups, such as our Muslim community. Through this process, the OCRC was able to propose unity maps that meet all of the relevant constitutional requirements and took into account public input.

For example, one of our Muslim community members, Hadiya Akhtar, testified about her residential community around the Noor Islamic Cultural Center, one of the biggest, mosques in Central Ohio. She testified about how her neighbors are split between two congressional and two state house districts. Therefore, diluting their collective voting power as a community. The OCRC was able to take Hadiya's testimony into account when drawing the proposed unity maps and remedy the issue within constitutional requirements.

Such an important task, that implicates all Ohioans and has the power to dictate policy reforms, demands a substantial amount of time, care, and attention. With missed deadlines, hearings announced with such short notice, and no virtual options the Ohio Redistricting Commission has missed critical opportunities to honor the constitutional amendment voted on by Ohioans.

We need to ensure that Ohio voters are fairly represented in Ohio government seats for the next 10 years. To ensure that the partisan makeup of Ohio's districts mirror the partisan makeup of Ohio's voters the statewide map should include approximately 55 districts whose voters lean towards the Republican party (54.5%), and 44 that lean Democratic (45.5%), and for the Senate, there should be 18 districts leaning Republican (54.5%) and 15 Democratic. (45.5%).

These maps will shape our lives, laws, and policies for at least the next decade. We need fair maps to make sure all of us, especially immigrant communities like mine and other communities of color, are fairly and equitably represented, no exceptions.

Thank you for your time today. This concludes my testimony.