

**Ohio Redistricting Commission Public Hearing**  
Akron, OH | Equitas Health Testimony

Friday, August 24, 2021

Co-Chair Cupp, Co-Chair Sykes, and honorable members of the Ohio Redistricting Commission, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony during today's regional hearing regarding the impact of the redistricting process on Equitas Health's stakeholders.

My name is Zachery McCune, and I am the Public Policy and Civic Engagement Manager for Equitas Health. We are a nonprofit, community-based health care organization that serves patients throughout Ohio with a diverse set of services, including primary and specialized medical care, pharmacy, behavioral health care, dental care, HIV/STI prevention, advocacy, and case management. We are a Community Health Center and the largest Ryan White Program provider in the state. We operate four health centers and pharmacies in Columbus, Dayton, and Cincinnati, and 13 regional offices – including one here in Akron, Ohio. Our mission is to be the gateway to good health for those at risk of or affected by HIV/AIDS, for the LGBTQ+ community, and for those seeking a welcoming health care home and we understand, and promote, the civic health of our stakeholders.

We offer testimony today to share the impact the decisions made by this commission will have on the civic health of our patients and clients for the next decade. The decisions made by this commission, including the boundaries you draw for our communities, will determine whether our interests receive fair representation in the halls of power. For over a decade, Ohioans have lived, and voted, under maps drawn to favor the party in power. Over the last ten years, we have seen minority voices and votes suppressed, ignored, and excluded from the policy making process as gerrymandered maps enabled hyper-partisanship. As a member of this commission, the public has entrusted you to create fair districts in Ohio and usher in an era of inclusion, adequate and appropriate representation, and bipartisanship.

On behalf our patients and clients, Equitas Health request that you draw fair and equitable districts that keep communities together and promote accountability – this will give voice to marginalized Ohioans and encourage participation in the electoral and legislative processes. When voters can hold elected officials accountable directly at the ballot box, policy outcomes improve.

Our agency provides case management, housing advocacy, and HIV supportive services to the residents of Summit County, a county split into four congressional districts under Ohio's current map. In this geographic region alone, we see how the dilution of our clients' voices occurs under these political divisions. An arbitrary line, drawn in a partisan fashion, divides a community that lives, works, and worships alongside one another. An arbitrary line that serves

no purpose other than furthering the interests of the party in power and suppressing the political power of the individual and the community they are elected to serve. Our stakeholders and your constituents need a fair process. They deserve a fair map.

Over the last few years, we have seen the effects of partisan gerrymandered maps on public policy right here in Ohio. The COVID-19 pandemic laid bare racial inequity and injustice, structural challenges to accessing healthcare and critical resources, and gaps in equity across the state. Rather than rising to meet this challenge, hyper-partisanship and gerrymandered maps created a disincentive for legislators to take necessary and bold action to improve the lives of Ohioans. Instead, we have witnessed legislation that created a broad license to discriminate in healthcare settings, an expansion of “stand your ground” laws that disproportionately harm and threaten the lives of Black Americans, proposals to institute prohibitions on masking and vaccination requirements, and proposals to restrict voting rights – the very mechanism we use to ensure accountability from our elected leadership. We urge you to rise up to this challenge and stand for fairness, accurate representation, and maps that authentically represent the diverse and vibrant communities across the state of Ohio.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony.

Sincerely,

Zach McCune, He/Him/His  
Public Policy and Civic Engagement Manager  
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