

Ohio Redistricting Commission Hearing
Interested Party Testimony from United Way of Greater Cleveland
August 27, 2021, University of Akron



Co-Chairs Cupp and Sykes and other distinguished members of the Ohio government, thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony for the Ohio Redistricting Commission.

United Way of Greater Cleveland (UWGC) is committed and deeply involved in non-partisan civic engagement and for over 100 years has brought together leaders in communities to solve problems in a non-partisan manner. Last year alone, UWGC engaged in a variety of census count activities throughout Cuyahoga and Geauga counties to help ensure an accurate census count to determine where resources are needed the most. This year, UWGC launched monthly community conversations which bring together local leaders, community members, government officials, elected representatives, and non-profit organizations to discuss the community impacts and outcomes of Cleveland's Consent Decree.

UWGC fights for the health, education, and financial stability of every person in every community in Cuyahoga and Geauga counties. This work cannot be done without community members who feel their elected officials and districts accurately and fairly represent them and their community. Moreover, UWGC is dedicated to advancing racial equity as shown in our 2021-2022 policy agenda. There is no better way to advance racial equity than by empowering all communities to be civically engaged and ensuring every community is fairly represented. However, people only feel engaged when their elected officials are responsive to them and are true members of their local community who understand the unique needs and solutions in their district.

As the Ohio Redistricting Commission begins its process of redrawing the Ohio House and Senate districts, UWGC recommends a fair, transparent, and equitable process that accurately reflect communities, are compact, and keep counties, cities, villages, and townships together within one district. In addition, we recommend allowing many opportunities for substantive community input, with virtual and in-person options, including a review of proposed maps for community feedback and multiple public forums throughout the state beyond one week to receive ample community input.

As Ohio and the country recover from the COVID pandemic, the public must have confidence that their elected officials represent them, their needs, and their community. This can only occur with accurately drawn and fair district lines for all constituents. The Redistricting Commission must genuinely partner with communities throughout the state to ensure the electorate is accurately represented and constituent voices are listened to.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony.