

Written statement for redistricting hearing (8/24, University of Cincinnati)

Dear members of the redistricting commission,

I've lived in rural and urban areas throughout my life. Through junior and senior high school, I lived in the town of Modoc, IN (population: ~200). My graduating class was 36 students. I've also lived in Indianapolis and, for the past year, Cincinnati. I loved both places. I found community and support in both places.

When I think about Ohio's gerrymandered districts, my first thought isn't about whether it helps Democrats or Republicans, or who gets more of the vote share, or anything related to partisan politics. I think about what it does to *communities*.

Under Ohio's current gerrymandered districts, I (living in Cincinnati) share a state representative with someone who lives all the way in Mt Holly, Ohio, 1 hour and 1 minute away from me, in a different county. We don't share the same schools, grocery stores, streets, weather, water, sewage systems, police, hospitals, firefighters, the same city or county. But we do share an elected representative, someone who is supposed to care about our concerns and advocate for our best interest.

You know who I don't share a representative with? The person who lives just 3 minutes north of me. That's my neighbor. We pass each other on walks. We share the same schools, grocery store, streets and sidewalks, weather, water, sewage systems, police, hospitals, firefighters, the same county, and city. My neighbor and I share a community, but we don't share an elected official who we can work with to solve problems in that community.

Gerrymandering does give rural voters an outsized influence in politics, which is anti-democratic. But it also divides up neighbors (city and rural) who could otherwise wield their collective power to solve problems in their communities. Gerrymandering hurts everyone.

For that reason, I am asking that the redistricting committee please consider the importance of community solidarity when remapping districts. The better these districts reflect the real communities in Ohio today, the better chance we have of seeing the will of the people served in Ohio tomorrow.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Justin Chandler