

Ohio Redistricting Commission
8-24-2021
Sinclair Community College
Dayton, Ohio

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [00:00:03] My name is State Senator Vernon Sykes, senator from the Akron area and co-chair of the Ohio Redistricting Commission, I like to welcome you. This is a series of hearings that we're having all over the state, 10 in total. These are just the first hearings. There will be other hearings. We appreciate your participation here today. We'd like to start by thanking our host, Sinclair Community College. And we have words of greetings from Dr. Steven Johnson, president.

Steven Johnson [00:00:41] [not using a mic] Thank you. Senator Sykes, I'm going to stand here and welcome to Sinclair...How many of you are here for the first time? Welcome, Senator. Thank you [inaudible] So this is your district, so thank you so much for choosing to be here at Sinclair and for all the rest of our state elected officials, thank you so much. I have just a few things to say. You picked a great time. It's the first week of classes [inaudible] Sinclair, a lot of activity, we're getting back to normal. We are educating over thirty-one thousand [inaudible] education this year, thousands of such classes. And so, you know, the students are going about fifty-fifty online and in person. We had a great year last year right in the middle of...all this Covid. We had the largest graduating class in our history, nearly 8000 students to see eleven thousand [inaudible] degrees. We're hitting it hard. This fall started up...yesterday was the first day of fall classes. We started out with our 300 majors [inaudible] respiratory therapists [inaudible] increased the number of [inaudible]. We're also going to... This year, we're increasing the number of RN nurses. So, the biggest cohort in history of the college, you know, that's a long time, 135 years. We are now in 135th year. One of the oldest [inaudible] colleges in the United States. A lot of nurses will be coming out of here [inaudible]. And, you know, [inaudible]. And we just graduated this spring our first students in that area. So, I'm going to stop bragging about Sinclair and just say this. So glad that you chose Sinclair [inaudible] Conference Center. We have some 400 events like this. Exactly like those the various community events a year. So, we are very pleased to host...We love the host. So thankful that you chose us to host. If you need anything whatsoever, there's a whole bunch of us from Sinclair wandering around. So, if you need anything, let us know. We're happy to help. Thank you, sir.

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [00:03:14] Thank you, Mr. President, for your comments and use of the facility. Certainly appreciated. We now like to call to order the Dayton regional hearing here of the Ohio Redistricting Commission. We would like to note also those that would like to testify if you would please complete a witness slip, they're available... staff available to give them to you if you need one. Thank you very much. Will the staff please call the roll?

Roll Call [00:03:46] Yes, sir. Co-Chair. (Present). Representative Phil Plummer, (Present) designee for speaker Cupp (Present). Matt Donahue designee for governor, Mike DeWine (present). Alex Belichick designee for auditor, Keith Faber, (present) Secretary of State Frank LaRose (here), Representative Kristen Boggs, designee for leader Emilia Sykes (Here). And last but not least, Senator Louis Blessing, designee for President Matt Huffman (Present).

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [00:04:26] A quorum being present, we will move forward. As we all know, in November of 2015, Ohio voters approved a constitutional

amendment which implemented a new General Assembly redistricting process and established redistricting... Ohio redistricting commission. The commission consists of the governor, the state auditor, the secretary of state, and one commissioner appointed by each of the legislative leaders of the two largest political parties of the Ohio House and the Ohio Senate, a total of four one from each of the caucuses. The commission has until September 1st, 2021, to pass a plan with the votes of at least two members affiliated with each majority party. If it fails, the commission has until September the 15th, 2021, to pass a plan by majority vote just for members. If it if it receives the vote of two from both of the parties, it would it would be in place for a 10-year period, if not only by a simple majority, it would be in place for a four-year period. As you know, we do this redistricting process every 10 years based on the census conducted by the United States Department of Commerce. And this year, last year, the census was completed, conducted and we have 11 million seven hundred ninety-nine thousand four hundred forty-eight citizens in Ohio at that particular time with a two-point three percent growth from 2010. Therefore, we have one hundred and nine... Approximately one hundred nineteen thousand persons for the House districts and three hundred fifty-seven thousand approximately for the Senate districts. As you know, drawing these lines and... Is more than just apportion the right to the correct number of persons to each of the districts. But it requires sometimes some complex requirements, which would include a representation of fairness. District population requirements. Permissible deviations, rules on how to prioritize splits of political subdivisions, additional district standards regarding favoring or disfavoring of political parties, and compactness. Because we have a deadline right upon us of September 1st with the state legislative districts, we are focusing mostly on those state legislative districts. We asked you to please limit your comments to state legislative districts. Again, we're having hearings all over the state. They are being broadcast and recorded on The Ohio Channel. We also have a website, www.redistricting...redistricting.Ohio.gov, where additional information is being posted about additional hearings where you can submit written testimony and also submit maps. It is important that we allow each person the courtesy and an opportunity to speak. We...looking at the number of witness clips that we have. We're going to limit you to four minutes. We will have a sign up at,.. One minute...do we have that sign?.. So, it won't be a hard and fast cut off, but please pay attention if you would also please forgive me as I stumble over names. It is not my intention to do that, but if it sounds similar to your name, please step forward. It is being recorded. Please talk into the mike so that everyone can hear so that we all have the information for future deliberations. At this time, we like to move forward with the hearing, the first person is Meredith Brinegar.

Brinegar [00:09:19] Thank you. My name is Meredith Brinegar and I live in Bellbrook, a Dayton suburb in Greene County. I'm also speaking on behalf of my nephew Matthew, who is in seventh grade and lives in Cincinnati. He's passionate about geography, maps and politics. He, a 12-year-old, can easily see how gerrymandered his U.S. congressional district is, Cincinnati shape is still a regular. It has been turned into a piece of jewelry featuring the country's worst offenders. He can also tell you about the snake on the lake. I'll keep my message brief. I voted, along with the vast majority of Ohioans, to create fair districts in 2015 and 2018. Now is the time to make this a reality. We know the criteria and we will be watching. We want elections that are determined by citizens, not politicians. Thank you.

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [00:10:13] Are there any questions? [applause] Seeing none, thank you very much...

Kim Senft-Paras [00:11:15] [no audio] ...Passed with over 70 percent of Ohio voters voting in the affirmative for these ballot issues, both reforms passed in all 88 of Ohio's counties because redistricting happens only 10 years, it is imperative that the commission use this opportunity to remedy the gerrymandered districts made in 2011. The Ohio State government makes decisions that affect every aspect of my life, including environmental laws, infrastructure, taxes and voting rights. As members of our shared geographic area, my neighbors, friends and family share culture, history and economic policy concerns because of where we live. Centreville is part of the 41st House District represented by Andrea White, but we are nestled in Washington Township, which is represented by...which is represented by Tom Young, who acts for the 42 District. These communities share the Centerville City School District, the Washington Centreville Public Library System, the center of a Washington Park district, and the Washington Township Fire Department. As a community of interest, Centreville and Washington Township would benefit from cohesive representation from our government. Communities of interest do not necessarily share the same political viewpoints or support for certain candidates or political parties. However, redistricting lines must be drawn so that communities of interest are preserved to the greatest degree possible, so that they can effectively organize and advocate for their interest. Communities of interest should be the building blocks of redistricting. Over the last five months, I have worked with members of the local League of Women Voters to engage community members around our county to draw maps for their communities, outlining their own stories and drawing lines around the area they consider their community where they share values, customs and concerns. I hope you will review the maps we have submitted for Montgomery County during your deliberation of overall state district maps. For an employment opportunity, I moved from south... I moved to southwest Ohio from northeast Ohio. The infamous Ninth District, nicknamed the State Snake on the Lake, is a glaring example of the gerrymandered work done during the 2011 redistricting process. If the commission fails to create contiguous, non-gerrymandered represent... representationally fair maps, it will be complicit in creating safe districts, which result in predictable election outcomes, resulting in unresponsive elected officials, disengaged voters and dysfunctional government, which serves only those who made the maps. In summary, I am asking the Ohio Redistricting Commission to follow the law, set aside party allegiance and restrain themselves from power grabs by packing and cracking districts. Show your veracity, strength and transparency by championing accountability, demonstrating bipartisanship and embracing public participation. Thank you for your time and consideration of my request.

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [00:14:36] Thank you, [applause] are there any questions? Thank you very much. Laurel Kerr.

Kerr [00:14:52] Good morning. I'm Laurel Kerr and I live in Washington Township, a suburb of Dayton. State House District 42 and state Senate District 6. Thank you for the opportunity this morning to share my testimony. It's important to me to share my testimony today because it has become clear in recent years that our lives depend upon a democracy that includes fair representation. Gerrymandering provides the illusion of democracy, but actually denies it, our representational system was hijacked in 2011 when state legislators drew gerrymandered districts with the clear goal of maintaining power. This has nothing to do with serving the citizens of Ohio. It is well documented that gerrymandered districts result in extreme voices of a party being elected as the election is usually won in the primary. Extreme voices do not usually reflect common sense and do not reflect the majority views of citizens. I would like to use gun safety as an example of how extreme voices of politicians elected, because of gerrymandering, have made our state less safe and a less desirable place to live. You may remember the mass shooting in

the Oregon district just two years ago. There was much said, at that time, about passing laws that would enhance gun safety. And the phrase "do something" resonated with many citizens, regardless of political party, with the hope that our legislators would enact laws to reduce fatalities. Instead, a castle doctrine that extends to any area where a person is legally allowed to be, rather than just their home or car, was passed. Allowing someone to shoot and kill based on a perceived threat, even if later... It was discovered the victim had no intention of causing harm. The duty to retreat, if at all possible, was removed. My state senator, Niraj Antani, formerly my representative, stated that high school seniors should be allowed to carry their long guns to school. This is a ridiculous statement, which he, to my knowledge, has not retracted. This was published in the Dayton Daily News. I think we can all agree that it is more likely, based on recently passed Ohio laws, that someone in our community will die because of a bullet. Even after 70 percent of Ohioans expressed a desire for changes to gun laws to better protect our families. Today, I am asking the commissioners to only accept state and congressional maps that fairly represent the voters of Ohio. Nothing more, nothing less. The life of someone you love may depend upon it. I thank you.

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [00:18:33] Thank you very much. [applause] Stanley Hertel

Hertel [00:18:50] Good morning to the commission. My name is Stanley Hertel. I'm speaking as chair of the Social Justice and Peacemaking Ministry unit of College Hill Community Presbyterian Church at Cornell and Philadelphia drives in Dayton. We appear to...in right to support fair representative districts for all voters and to oppose gerrymandering or manipulation of the redistricting process for the gain of some politicians or political parties at the expense of others or voters generally, particularly minority voters. Every American should have the right to vote and have their vote have equal influence in the government that results...let me do this... We contact you because our faith tradition expects justice from the powerful, care for the needy and vulnerable, and love for the worth of all people in all their diversity. Accordingly, outsiders in the poor to be valued, everyone's vote should have equal influence. Workers are to be paid a fair wage, a fair marketplace is required, and greed and exploitation are to be avoided. These values are not limited to our Judeo-Christian faith tradition, but are found throughout American society. Our church is a racial and cultural rainbow that values all people were located in a mostly African American neighborhood in northwest Dayton. Many around us are lower moderate income. Our community has been targeted for numerous kinds of disinvestment, so often described as an employment desert, food desert, a health care desert and a retail desert. It could also be seen as a democracy desert because a number of institutional issues, including gerrymandering, belief in the responsiveness of government to the needs of people here is comparatively low. Election participation is low. Many do not believe that they should invest emotionally in a process that is stacked against them. This needs to change now. We Americans believe in a democratic system, meaning people choose their leaders. The best decisions are made with the approval of the most people and from the bottom up rather than the top down. The US Constitution provided the general framework but was relatively new system when it was adopted. So since then, people seeking power have studied how to game the system, generate unfair advantages that diminish the democratic process. One of these was the manipulation of electoral districts for partisan advantage named gerrymandering after one of its original perpetrators nearly 200 years ago. Since then, pretty much everyone who is able to get away with gerrymandering has done it, including both political parties in Ohio and elsewhere. Computers have made it easy to manipulate the same data dividing and combining voters for partisan advantage. A look at the Ohio maps adopted after the 2010 census shows bizarre shapes and

discontinuities that can have no purpose but to turn a small advantage in voters into a large advantage in legislative seats. Ohio voters have rejected this tactic. When they endorse these new procedures for this census, they expect [inaudible] districts and this commission to provide them. Gerrymandering creates uncompetitive districts discouraging and disillusioning voters who feel that the districting has determined the outcome and their votes don't count. They will disengage and not participate. This is harmful to democracy. Officials serve, not the voters, but those who draw the districts. Thus, the legislation the people need and what does not get passed, Dis...districts are competitive, politicians try to solve problems and must listen to voters. In this decade, few elections for Congress and the Ohio legislature have been competitive. Principals of Ohio law now say district drawn should give no advantage to any political party or candidate. Communities are to be preserved and there's limited division of existing political entities. Communities should be broadly defined to first include metropolitan areas who share economic and social interdependence. Elections are also covered by the Voting Rights Act and Civil Rights Act. Racial inequality in America's history has been enforced by various election mechanisms, including voter suppression and gerrymandering designed to minimize the political power of minorities. These efforts continue today and are unacceptable. Accordingly, we call on the commission to draw districts that are fair, compact, representative, competitive, unbiased and respectful of the rights of minorities. Gerrymandering must end. Thank you for your attention.

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [00:23:57] [applause] Next, we have Ms. Maddie White. And I understand that you have some others you like to join you at the podium?

White [00:24:06] Thank you.

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [00:24:07] Yes, yes. Come forward. Members of Delta Sigma Theta,

White [00:24:12] Thank you for their recognition and good morning to the gentleman and madam of the redistricting commission. My name is Maddie White. I am first vice president for the Dayton Union NAACP. I am also a member along with my sisters of the Ohio redistricting cohort for Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Incorporated. I want to thank you for providing the opportunity to be informed of the interest of communities, citizens across Ohio of an interest and an expectation in their districting. Across the last decade, Republicans have only won 54 percent of the statewide share of state legislative races, but they occupy about 75 percent of the Ohio Senate and 65 percent of the Ohio House. That is not fair. Our map drawers in 2011, cracked apart various communities to drown out our voices and pack together, other ones to diminish our overall impact on our political futures. Take Dayton, for example, and its surrounding communities, the city whose voters, especially in the black communities, tend to support Democrats. It's cracked apart in two Senate districts that carve up the city to drown it into surrounding rural and conservative districts. At the House level, the city is equally as carved apart, allowing for just one Democratic seat and splitting apart the black communities in Trotwood, apart from those in either Dayton or Huber Heights. Under a fair map, we'd have districts that actually serve our communities, not one that served our politicians. If the criterion for the process—compactness, preserving communities of interest, contiguous communities, boundary preservation, compliance with the Voting Rights Act are adhered to, their districting will be achieved. The current maps split apart our communities, diluting our votes and undermining our collective political power. Moving forward, we need to uncracked and unpack our cities to restore power back to the people where it belongs. Our communities must be kept together so that we can have real pathways to representation. We're not

asking for maps to be rigged for one party or the other. We're asking for a fair shot and be enabled to elect representatives of our choosing. I thank you that this is a process that you are engaging in, that we are engaging in, that is of the people, for the people, by the people. Future maps must reflect Ohio, its partisan makeup and its diversity. If we vote nearly 50/50 between Democrats and Republicans, that should be reflected in who's able to get elected to serve in our legislative bodies. A fair map would also, importantly, ensure that voters of color have adequate and proportional political representation, which is the essence of these hearings that we want you guys to please hear, consider, act and make decisions and the interest and the expectations of the people. In too many ways, Ohio's Black communities and other Communities of Color are left out of the conversation and they are the brunt of systemic inequities and failures and those have been echoed by the previous speakers. The same is true of the political process and how the lines are drawn. And I just want to make a note on the process while I am thankful for this process, because as you have heard, it is the democratic way. It is the constitutional right. I do want to say that the hearings that this commission is hosting are being held in the middle of the workday and only on weekdays. That means that too many Ohioans are being left behind in having their voices heard about what they need in the future maps moving forward. Hearings must be made accessible to all Ohioans. That means having hearings outside normal business hours, hosting them on weekends and providing virtual testimony options for people who either can't attend are not comfortable. So, again, I thank you for this opportunity and please consider that the decisions being made are going to affect the next decade. So not just us, but the future generations. Thank you.

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [00:29:03] [applause] Thank you very much. Scott DiMauro.

DiMauro [00:29:20] Good morning, Cochairs Sykes and distinguished members of the Ohio Redistricting Commission. My name is Scott DiMauro. I'm a high school social studies teacher from Worthington. It is also my honor to serve as the president of the Ohio Education Association. On behalf of OEA and our 120,000 members, I thank you for the opportunity to address you today. The work done by this commission will have a large impact and a lasting effect. Since the last maps were drawn, Ohioans have twice voted to reform our redistricting process for both congressional and state legislative districts, OEA was an early supporter of both measures. Among the legislative policies and resolutions adopted by our members is a continuing theme of democracy. OEA believes that voters should have access to the polls and that citizen participation should be encouraged. It's what we teach our students, it's what I've taught my students and it's central to our character as a nation. Partisan gerrymandering subverts our democracy. It's designed to devalue the voice of the voters to rig the game. Drawing districts to favor one party over another is wrong, it leads to less competition and a less responsive government. It leads to more polarization and less cooperation among our elected officials. OEA is committed to fair maps because we know a more inclusive democracy means better decisions for students, educators and communities. As educators, we serve students from all backgrounds. Lawmakers who are responsive to the voters are essential in meeting student needs. We've seen the impact on school funding since 1981, Ohio Department of Education data show that the more competitive balance in the legislature, the less to the cost of education, has been shouldered by local property taxpayers. Greater disparities in the balance of power in the legislature have correlated with a greater funding burden being placed on the backs of local property taxpayers. The strong support of voters on the redistricting issue is clear. It resulted in a change to the state constitution. This body is a product of that change. Now it's up to this body to live up to the letter and the spirit of the law. We need a transparent process that results in fair districts. Through this redistricting

process, Ohio has a chance to serve as an example to the country about how to do this the right way. I call on you to put partisanship aside and listen to the will of the people through working together and compromise, you can rise to the occasion and produce fair representative districts. The delay on census data has made your work harder and timelines tighter. We understand that, however, this cannot be used as an excuse. What the voters of Ohio have every right to expect and demand is a bipartisan agreement that results in a 10-year legislative map. Anything less would be a failure of leadership. I thank you for your time and attention. Be happy to answer any of your questions.

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [00:32:48] Are there any questions? Thank you very much. [applause] Mr. Ryan Leidel?

Leidel [00:33:05] I have Nothing to add.

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [00:33:16] Diana Pressnell.

Pressnell [00:33:29] Good morning. My name is Diana, and I am a resident of Greene County. Last year I had the pleasure of interviewing one of the candidates for the House of Representatives. She was running for the 8th District. After that interview, I was struck by the struggle she faced in representing two vastly disparate populations within her district...or within that district. The southern portion of that district is the urban suburban areas of north Cincinnati, while the remainder of that district is quite rural. And speaking to her, it was clear that if elected, she would have constituents with vastly different needs. How would she successfully be able to represent them all? With that question in mind, it is time that Ohio's districts are drawn in such a way that an elected representative has the ability to best represent as many of their constituents as possible. It is time for Ohioans representatives to reflect the true will of the voters and not the will of any particular political party. We, the people, have spoken by passing laws to ensure fairer districts. And we will be watching to make sure you, the commission, have listened.

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [00:34:49] [applause] Thank you. Janet Underwood.

Underwood [00:35:01] Hello, thank you for taking my comments. My name is Janet Underwood. I live at 108 East Hudson in Dayton. I am represented by the 39th House District and the 5th Senate District. And there's not much I can say that's different than what anybody else has said here today. And I left my notes in the back because I've been wearing my other hat as a photographer. But I just wanted to thank you for taking the time and making the effort to draw us fair districts this cycle and the people of Ohio voted two times to have better representation. We know what gerrymandering is, we expect you to do the right thing this time and I look forward to seeing the new maps. I hope you will take time to consider the maps that will be submitted to you by other people that have looked at them, because what we really need is maps that represent the communities that we live in. In Dayton, where our community is split in half so that our votes are diluted, and we need to have representation for our city so that we can get the resources that we need. And thank you very much. And I'm terribly sorry if my voice is shaky and I hate speaking in public. [laughter] Thank you.

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [00:36:39] Thank you Ms. Underwood, Ms Stephanie Smith.

Smith [00:36:47] Good morning. My name is [cough]...my name is Stephanie Smith, and I'm from Clayton, Ohio, which is northern Montgomery County. Lots of people got up here

today and spoke very eloquently. I'm going to talk first about the first time I got involved in Ohio politics. It was 1969. I was entering my senior year of high school and Proposition 19 was being considered. That was to change the Ohio law to allow 19-year-olds to vote. The idea was at that time, if you're old enough to kill, you're old enough to vote. I was expecting a big sigh and "OK, Boomer..." after that story [laughter] given the age of the people behind me, I think they pretty much know what I was talking about. So that's sort of got me involved. Recently I have been working very, very hard on registering voters. I do this along with the League of Women Voters. I go to festivals, I go to community groups, I go to farmer's markets. I do everything I can to get people to register to vote. The most often thing that I hear when someone is not registered and I ask them if they would like to is: "no, my vote doesn't count anyway and the whole system is rigged." That's sad for me to hear. I grew up in a home where I had one Republican parent, one Democrat parent. I would tease them when they would go out to vote...aren't you guys just cancelling each other out? And they told me, no, this is what we need to do and we do agree on some things. So, this is what I grew up with. One of my most fun thing to do is registering kids, going into the high schools and registering the young people. They're so excited. They're so excited. When I was getting signatures for the amendment, people didn't really know what gerrymandering was. A lot of them, all I had to do was show them the map. And they said, that's crazy! I said, I know, will you sign here? [laughter] And they did. In addition to working and volunteering with the league, I am also a CASA. I'm a court appointed special advocate. I act as guardian ad litem for kids who have been abused and neglected. I've worked with these kids for the last 18 months. Their whole life is [inaudible] something. Their life was disrupted before this. Now it's even worse. And they asked me because I have signs on the car about voting, you know, what do you do that? And I said, I do it because I think it's important. And the kids I talked to, they don't understand that. They have, they say things like, I don't want to declare a party. You don't have to. These are things that you have to know, I'm asking you guys and women to follow through with the spirit of how this was done to make my job easier when I go out and register the kids to vote, that I can show them that the system does work. Thank you.

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [00:40:23] [applause] Ms Smith, thank you very much, I graduated from high school in 1969, so I just want to say thank you for representing us...experienced citizens. [laughter] Kristin Beireis.

Beireis [00:40:50] I have provided a visual aid sort of make sure everybody has one of the a copy of that, there was a stack of eight with a map on the back. My testimony written out on top. That looks like it right there. No? I will try and use the one that I have in my hand and we'll see if that works. If you find it, please pass it out. Good morning.

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [00:41:27] Good morning. Good morning,

Beireis [00:41:29] Mr. Co-Chair, Commission. I am Kristin Beireis and I am in House District 62 and Senate District 7. Thank you for having this forum and for allowing me to speak today. I'm very concerned about voting in our state when representatives are focused on things that don't impact the area their constituents live in. People don't want to vote and don't feel their vote matters. In my community, I live just one block away from the Montgomery County line in Warren County. My neighbors vote for different Ohio House and Senate legislators, yet we share the same exact zip code. My district stops at the northern end of Warren County at the county line, yet at the southern edge of the county, my Senate district crosses the county line and goes all the way down to the Ohio River. When people talk about manufacturing and what we need to do to improve this state, I'm thinking of Dayton, Ohio, where I spend most of my time. However, I don't get to vote on

representatives looking out for those interests. When representatives are talking about schools and how we can improve them, they are thinking Lebanon, Mainville and Mason. While those are in my county of Warren County, they are not edge communities around the city of Dayton. Much of what we do in Springboro City Schools is compared to Miamisburg and Centerville in Montgomery County. I define my community by where I spend most of my time. Where do I go shopping, eat and have friends? My life is in Springboro and Montgomery County. My husband and I eat dinner in Springboro, Miamisburg, Miami County in Centerville, all of which are in Montgomery County except Springboro. We shop in Springboro and Montgomery County. My friends and place of worship are in Montgomery County, I'm in community theater and I sing in choirs in Springboro and Montgomery County. My doctors are in Springboro, Montgomery County and Greene County. You get the picture. My life is Springboro and North. When you look at that map, you can see that the pink dots are all the places where my life is, and that's the blue part, which is Springboro and the green part north, which is all in Montgomery County. Yet you can clearly see that my districts are the pink and purple below, and that's where my district is represented. It is important to consider community when drawing maps, I could have gone to the Cincinnati hearing today because basically I'm lumped in with Cincinnati and people will be talking about my districts more at that hearing than they are here. But that would have more than doubled my commute to come and speak with you today. While I am grateful this hearing is available and I was able to make it, I do want to express a few of my challenges in being here today in hopes that it will serve to help design this process better as you're moving forward. Given the last-minute nature of the scheduling for these hearings, it left very little time for communities to get here to give input. Even today, I had to scramble to change my schedule to be here. I didn't even know where I was supposed to park or whether I would have to pay for that parking until Friday. It's also concerning that all the hearings this week are being held during the day when most of my community is working. I have had to scramble to have my voice heard today, I feel it's extremely important to have fair maps drawn and I voted for this process for that reason. I also voted for transparency, community participation. I ask that you make those top priority as you move forward. Right now, my voice is included with people who live by Kings Island and near the Cincinnati area. How can anyone speaking for those whose lives are in the Dayton area also speak for those whose lives are in Cincinnati? Please draw maps that are representative of their communities and the legislators who will serve them. Thank you.

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [00:45:58] [applause] Thank you. William Davis.

Davis [00:46:20] Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, it's a pleasure to be here and to sit in on all the comments that people are making. My name is William Davis and I vote in the 40th Ohio House District and the 6th Senate District in Butler Township of Montgomery County. For over a decade, I have worked with other volunteers across Ohio advocating for universal, comprehensive health care. We commissioned an economic impact study that was released in 2019 stating that Ohio stood to save twenty-five billion dollars per year. That's B...billion... billion... with a single payer system. Despite years of effort to share the demonstrated benefits, it wasn't until 2019 that we were granted a hearing with a committee to present our economic study with thousands of signatures gathered over the years, we know there is building support in the state. Yet, because of gerrymandered districts being secure for the dominant party, we are not making the progress in the Statehouse that we should. We the people are unable to be heard over the party in power or the corporate money that put it there. A democracy defines a government by the people, we have a weak democracy because of unequal representation offered by skewed districts. People do not feel represented when their neighborhoods are carved out and put

in another district, conec...connected to another county. This discourages voting and is not how to foster a strong democracy. People on both sides of issues want to be heard and want representation that is responsive and fair to both sides. We need to end partisan bickering. And,.. and start working for the common good with respect to all views and much less weight given to corporations buying influence. This is why I ask you to support the spirit of the Ohio constitutional amendments related to drawing districts to be compact, competitive and to not favor either party. Thank you for your time and consideration of my request [applause].

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [00:49:01] Thank you, Joy Schwab.

Schwab [00:49:16] Hello, I'm Joy Schraub, I'm from Beavercreek, Ohio, and Greene County...and let me just say right off, I'm a boomer and I remember from my 1966 civics class in high school, they taught me that gerrymandering was wrong and that it was a ridiculous thing that was ridiculed for its political corruption that started in 1812. I was shocked to realize in the past 10 years that my state was severely gerrymandered. So I got active with fair districts and passed the legislation that, you know, is going to try to do something about this, the legislation that I hope you will take seriously and spirit and intent. What we need are representative government, you don't get this with gerrymandering. With gerrymandering, the most extreme elements of a party can win elections in a district where normally a candidate would have to take into account the full range of views, a wide-ranging opinion in that area...Let's see, according to Thomas Sutton, a Baldwin Wallace political science professor and director of the Community Research Institute. Gerrymandering or the drawing of state legislative lines do all but guarantee one political party with most seats. He says the result is that rural and Republican districts have supermajorities in both the Ohio House and Senate because of those super majorities that were created by gerrymandering, the actions of the Ohio legislature are often at odds with the majority of opinion in our state. For example, Ohio legislatures, especially over the past 10 years, have passed a couple dozen laws to restrict abortion in our state, including the extreme and unconstitutional so-called heart bill... heartbeat bill that bans abortion after a fetus' heartbeat is detected at about six weeks when most women don't even know that they're pregnant. They did... you passed this law in a state where the majority of Ohio voters believe that in most or all cases a woman should have the right to an abortion. Because of the passing of this unconstitutional law—it's tied up in the courts now, and Ohio taxpayers are being forced to pay the costs to, you know, fight for this unconstitutional law and to put up with it. That's just one example of, you know, the extreme dominating the supermajorities in the state because of gerrymandering. Responsible Republicans should want to distance themselves from these extreme views. But it's hard to do when a district is gerrymandering so that whoever wins the Republican primary will automatically win that district. This was also cited as a problem with gun laws in Ohio. Let's see, someone pointed out that 70 percent of the voters' desire to change gun laws to protect firearms. 90 percent of the people said said that...let's see. Oh, OK... when asked, do you support or oppose requiring background checks for all gun buyers? 90 percent of Ohio voters said yes, including 87 percent of gun owners and 89 percent of Republicans. You know, and yet we have laws in our state, you know, for Stand Your Ground and the Castle Doctrine and Ohio lawmakers are even considering a bill to eliminate training and background checks on those who carry concealed guns. You know, this just does not jive with, you know, what the majority of voters want in Ohio. Even the majority of Republican voters. So please, you know you know, I may not be here in the next 10 years. Let's face it. I would like to see this get done now, where for once and all gerrymandering is put to rest in Ohio and we have a fair and representative elections in our state so that we don't have these extreme positions being made into policy where we will have a fair and balanced

legislature that represents the total population of Ohio, including in my extremely gerrymandered districts in Beavercreek. Thank you. Any questions?

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [00:54:46] [applause] Any questions? Thank you very much....Bill Benner

Benner [00:55:07] Co-Chair Sykes, Secretary LaRose, designees of the other five commission members who weren't able to be here today, my name is Bill Benner. I'm the director of organizing political and legislative activity for the United Food and Commercial Workers Union, Local 75. And I'd like to thank all of you for allowing me the opportunity to be here today. We represent in our local union over 30,000 hard working grocery workers, pharmacy retail workers, food packing and processing workers. Folks in distribution centers and health care facilities and our members live, work and vote in every corner of our jurisdiction, which runs the entirety of the I-75 corridor from Toledo to Cincinnati. We also include parts of northern Kentucky, southeast Indiana. Serving the essential function of ensuring food, medicine and medical care and more are available...are available to all of our families, friends and neighbors, our members are a true community-based union and the backbone of the communities they serve. The members of our union worked tirelessly to ensure all of us have the essential items we need when we need them, and for the most part, they don't expect a whole lot. A fair wage, affordable and quality health care, some time with their family, right to negotiate for better and the ability to join a union to have a collective voice on the job. They really want what we all want, good schools for our children and grandchildren, roads and bridges that are drivable, clean, drinkable water, safe neighborhoods. And we know all these issues and many more come down to why we're here today—fair districts. But in order to have fair districts, we need a fair process for creating them. Now our members are busy. They work weekdays and evenings, they work weekends and most holidays. Our work schedules are written usually two weeks in advance. The meetings that were proposed by this commission are set during regular working hours Monday through Friday. Schedule of these hearings was posted about 10 days before today. All of this makes it near impossible for most working people, not just my members, most working people, to attend and voice their opinions. Light of the advancement in virtual meetings over the last year and a half, it would seem more possible than ever... we could have done things to accommodate more voices to be here today...the very people these hearings were intended to incorporate into this process. Ohio voters made their intent clear in 2015 and 2018 to make this a fair, open and transparent process. Well, it's clear more could have been done to make these public hearings accessible to working people. It is my hope that this commission will at least uphold their duty to create the fair districts we deserve. But I'm not going to hold my breath. Even more disheartening than the schedule, is that two of the seven actual folks tasked with being here and I thank you both for being here, actually made it. I also thank all of you who did dedicate your time to be here. We have seven folks designated to this commission that couldn't be here today. If I did something like that to my members, I'd be fired or voted out of office. [applause] When a pandemic hit, a global pandemic hit, my members showed up. [applause] Does not seem that those elected to perform this task have the same worry, and I think we should all ask ourselves why. One, thank you all for the opportunity to speak and encourage this commission to do better. Thank you.

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [00:59:25] [applause] Questions? Thank you. Bill Ebben.

Ebben [00:59:46] Morning. My name is Bill Evans. I lost my son, Tim, to a fentanyl overdose. What does that have to do with redistricting? Well, let me tell you. Currently,

Ohio is not a red state or a blue state. But it's a rigged state. [applause] And this is costing, among other ways, 200 Americans their lives every day, it's costing serious money. When I say serious, we spent a trillion dollars over the last 50 years on a failed war on drugs. And it's worse than that because it makes... the war on drugs makes every Ohioan miserable. You know, we put up with prostitution, property crime, armed robbery, violence in our streets, high murder rates. And all of these problems are a direct result of the way we're doing the war on drugs. We just accept these problems in our lives while we do very little to help Ohio citizens, citizens who are addicted to opiates, often through the medical system, and through no fault of their own. When either party has a rigged stranglehold on our government, we no longer have a marketplace of ideas. This stifles our progress as a state and a nation, a slave-ish devotion to the status quo, prevents growth and ignores new ways to deal with our problems because of the stifling of the competition of ideas. Gerrymandering is rigging the system. If one party wins the battle to rig the system, it means for the next 10 years they don't even have to listen to the minority party. There's no debate in the legislature. The rigged party doesn't have to give any more than lip service to the ideas of the minority party and the millions of citizens they represent. More... They represent more people than the party that's in the majority. Now, Bill, you know, life's not fair, you know, I graduated in 1969, my draft number was eight. I you know, I've noticed that life's not fair. But you know what? That's not an excuse for not trying to get things to be as fair as they can. I have this idea. About how to change the war on drugs and I might be completely wrong. My son Tim was a Cisco certified network engineer who worked until the day he died. Tim died alone of an overdose because the war on drugs punishes addicts instead of helping them. It forces addicts and stigmatizes them so that they take their drugs alone. And they often die alone, even with Narcan in the room. Because there's no one there to give them the Narcan. I've been running, but I just wanted one term in Congress. So I could introduce this idea. All right, I'm 70, I gave it away with the '69 thing. One term, so I could introduce this idea and this idea, I couldn't even get anybody to listen when I was running because it was a joke, I went out there and people were laughing, oh, you're the Democrat that's running. Yeah, that's real funny. All I want is a fair fight. When I drive around in the district, I have to drive an hour, through two counties that are not in my district to get to a county that is in my district. I live in Westchester. I have to drive through Dayton to get up into Greene County. All I want is a chance to make America better for everyone, a chance to save 200 Americans from dying of a completely preventable overdose every day, 200 every day, 92,000 last year, which is 30 percent more than the year before. Gerrymandering is killing people. Gerrymandering makes a mockery of the ideal of one man, one vote. It kills the chance of a new idea being considered by Congress. I just want to stop 200 Americans from dying. I just want there to be in Ohio next Thanksgiving, fewer empty seats at Thanksgiving dinner table. Let's do the right thing. Thank you.

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [01:05:04] [applause] Connie Crockett.

Crockett [01:05:17] If I may. Good morning to Mr. Sykes and the full committee. My name is Connie Crockett. I am a resident of Yellow Springs and that is in Greene County. I am a program officer with the Charles F. Kettering Foundation here in Dayton. And we are working with people around the world seeking ways to better democracy, make it work as it should. I am a patriotic Democrat who was raised by Republican parents. My parents experience with the Depression and World War II, taught them and brought me into a world where Americans could do great things together. Visiting the capital at an early age, I saw that democracy was a fair and equal contest between competing ideals. What I hold in common with both my parents and my employer, who is a former cabinet member in the Ford administration, is a very deep respect for the citizens' role in democracy. So I've

always taken voting seriously. I wanted to be like a person in the capitol and be a part of that contest of ideas. So I have run for my local precinct, I've served there, I've served on my state level committee, I have served as a village council member in Yellow Springs. And I have to say that working with constituents on a daily basis, so talking over the produce, et cetera, was greatly meaningful to me. I later took a master's in public administration from the University of Dayton, hoping to run for higher office. And I eventually did run for the state legislature and what was previously the 84th District. With that as background, I just wanted to speak to you as a former politician, one who has experience running in three counties that were drawn to elect a Republican. So I was a candidate in 2006 and 2008 in the old 84th, and I knew that the odds were terrible for my candidacy, but I ran so that people had some sense of choice on the ballot, if nothing else. The gerrymandered district, I think people behind me would recognize this, went from a corner of Montgomery County, Bellbrook, all the way up to Plain City and was equally crazy to the east and west. It was mostly made up of small towns very carefully excising any town of any significant size, which I thought was deeply unfair, because if you live in a small town, you need the bigger towns. It's it's it's how you function. It's where you go to work, et cetera. If I had to draw a district that would include my town, it's now the 73rd, I would focus on where do people... where do people work? Where do they, as others have said, where do they feel at home? And so therefore I would include in in the district, Springfield, Fairborn, Beavercreek and Xenia. I found that in running for office in three counties made up of small towns, that frequently people in small towns see their neighboring community as a competitor and they weren't very willing to...even the one town had a great idea, they weren't willing to work with another town to bring that to fruition. The last time I pulled up campaign signs, we drove over a thousand miles to do so. In a conversation with my husband, a former republican governor said to him, "Jesus Christ himself could not have won the 84th district as a Democrat." [laughter] So that's the challenge. What people in America are demanding right now is to feel represented. They want to be represented by race, gender and identity, and they do not see themselves in the statehouse. This is not a perfect example, but, we are a majority female state and the state house is 71 percent male. So count me among the people who don't necessarily see myself as represented. Something personal that I feel that you could all relate to as elected officials is that when you're running for office and you meet someone and they grab your hand and they look you in the eye and they offer you their faith, they say, please help us. It's extremely moving. And so to know, as I did, the odds of my winning office being very, very slim, I felt complicit in some sort of charade. And despite doing it a few times, I loved meeting the people. I'd love to do it again. But, you know, eventually it sickened me to the goal that I thought that politics was about in terms of the contest of fair and equal competing ideals. So what I found is that, voters do not recognize that even though they think their vote matters, that it may not that there's a foregone conclusion. And anyway, I didn't want to litigate my sad story, but I will say that I did want to speak to you today simply about my protest of ruling parties choosing their voters. Of voters, not having a full measure of control over who represents them in the statehouse. And that I think that our current system is not democracy as a free and fair exchange of competing ideas. So that's my testimony. And I thank you very much.

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [01:11:55] [applause] Thank you very much. Michael Morat. Maylene Miller.

Miller [01:12:29] Good morning, sir. (Good morning.) I'm not a very eloquent speaker. I just learned about this. It's bad timing. I had to take off work just to be here. My name is Mrs. Miller, Leney Miller out of Riverside and I live near Wight-Patt. I came down here from Akron, Ohio, and went to the University of Akron. And I work locally. My husband's a

trucker and my son, he serves over in (inaudible). I'm sorry I'm shaking so...And we love this country. [applause] We love the Constitution. [applause] I'm very appreciative that I'm able to exercise my First Amendment right, I believe in my Second Amendment right all the way down to the Tenth Amendment right. I want to say there's been five political races. In Ohio and I was so concerned with 2020, I went and served at the polls and a lot of voters were asking if the machines were hooked up to the Internet. Now, I was told no. And after the election, I was very disappointed. But there's five political state races. The governor, the attorney general, the secretary of state, the auditor. OK? Were all won by Republicans, and I don't think you can gerrymander a state. Ohio is dominated by Republicans. Eighty-one of the counties are red, seven are blue. And I think it should be redistrict by Republicans, because Republicans wanted, they come out and vote, I vote. Lastly. I would like to see better meeting places so I can be more prepared, and that's all I have today. Thank you, sir.

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [01:14:48] [applause] Thank you. David.

Dauids [01:15:10] Co-Chair Sykes, secretary of the LaRose, members of the commission, thank you so much for this opportunity to testify today. My name is Steven David and I live in South Columbus in Ohio's 18th House and 15th Senate District with my wife and two children. So I'm a licensed social worker and much of my practice focuses on educating social work students and practitioners on the importance of voting and civic engagement. So when I do this work encouraging health and Human Services professionals to incorporate nonpartisan voter outreach into their existing services, I like to focus on how voting is a healthy behavior. For individuals, civic engagement promotes a greater sense of life satisfaction and can act as a buffer against psychological distress like depression. And communities that vote tend to have greater access to services that promote overall health. But despite what I think is a very convincing case for the benefits of political participation, we know that there is persistent disaffec...disaffection with this process. So national data shows us that feeling that your vote doesn't count or that doesn't really influence how decisions are made are among the top reasons that people give for choosing not to vote. And when we look at how our maps are currently drawn here in the state of Ohio, how can we blame people for feeling this way? When I'm talking to young people and social workers, someone invariably asks the question, but what about gerrymandering? And believe me, I have a slide about it in my presentation. But to me, the question itself is evidence that people know this is happening and they know that it is wrong. And we need only look at the over 70 percent of voters who twice demanded a better map making process to know that people want this to change and they want it now. [applause] So a great deal of time and debate has also gone into this question about the trust and integrity of our elections this year, and I would contend that there is, in fact, no greater evidence-based threat to the integrity of our electoral system than the practice of splitting apart and carving out neighborhoods to predetermine the winners. Elections only have integrity when political leaders are accountable to all their voters, not just primary contests where we race as far and as fast as possible into our partisan corners and then take disconnected ideas back to the statehouse. So in the end, I'm going to echo a sentiment that was said earlier that I'm, in fact, ask you to make my job a little bit easier. Make the case for voting a little bit stronger. Don't give my students and my community partners such strong talking points about the political system ignoring them because of spiraling, snaking maps that break apart their neighborhoods. Let's take away the doubt that so many Ohioans have that their votes don't count because the lines have been drawn to pick the winners. So by deciding to draw fair maps this year, you have this amazing opportunity to send this message that what's important to the state of Ohio is not

cementing partisan advantage, but actually reflecting the will and representing the interests of the people of the state. I'm happy to answer any questions.

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [01:17:58] Any questions? Thank you. [applause]
Renee Westermeyer

Westermeyer [01:18:20] Hi, my name is Renee Westermeyer, I'm from Springboro, House District 62 and Senate District 7. After moving from base to base as an Air Force family nine years ago, we settled in Ohio because our kids called it home. Even though Ohio and the Dayton area has so much to offer, I sometimes regret our choice. In the relatively short time we have lived here, I have witnessed Ohio and its leadership slipping away from values that I and my family hold dear—the values of community, public health and safety, along with protecting our environment, inclusivity and human rights. My testimony touches on a few points on how my family, as well as countless other Ohioans, are directly impacted by a lack of fair representation due to gerrymandering. According to OhioGOP.org, Ohio House and Senate seats are held by their party 64 percent and 75 percent, respectively. Yet the voting public is nearly evenly split, with 42 percent Republican leaning and 40 percent Democrat. That leaves a large percentage of our population without fair or equal representation and no voice in our state's future. I am a survivor of gun violence. My husband and I were robbed at gunpoint. He was pistol whipped. And even though neither of us had lasting physical injuries, there were mental scars. My children have endured several school lockdowns due to active shooters on campus or near their schools. And again, there were mental scars. I had taken a group of out-of-town guests to Dayton's Oregon district earlier in the evening of the mass shooting. We all escaped without physical harm, but again, there were lasting mental scars and they fear coming back to visit. After the shooting, state officials promised to take action to keep us safer. Yet instead of passing a universal background check like 90 percent of Ohioans favor, our unbalanced legislator... voted to pa... legislature, voted to pass a Stand Your Ground bill instead. That has shown to increase murder rates in states with these laws by up to 50... 55 percent and was strongly opposed by the majority of Ohioans, as well as most law enforcement agencies. Recently, my daughter was an eyewitness to a shooting close to OSU. Again, there were mental scars left for her, and even though the victim was unarmed and non-threatening, the shooter was not charged because of the Stand Your Ground law and got away with attempted murder. I am also a strong advocate for the LGBTQ+ community in our state. I have family members and numerous friends that identify on the spectrum. In the three plus years I volunteered as an ally for our local transgender support group, I have seen the devastating effects that discrimination can have on a person or a community. Lack of housing options, services both by the government and businesses, as well as within our or school systems and universities is a detriment to individuals and our state. Even though there are some federal protections for job discrimination and at school levels, there is much to be done in other areas. For example, if an LGBTQ+ person applied for housing within Dayton's city limits, they are protected from discrimination based on city laws like 35 other states that have passed similar laws in Ohio. If that same person's application is rejected by a landlord based on orientation in Springboro or Centreville, both areas I've lived in, they have little protections under current state law. For this reason, the Ohio Fairness Act has been introduced in the state House and Senate ten times without even getting hearings until recently. This act is...has support from 68 percent of Ohioans as well as major businesses in our state. But due to the inequality of representation, this act has yet to pass and our citizens remain unprotected. Our lopsided, un-representational maps protect those legislators that are not willing to listen to the 90 percent of us that want greater safety measures for gun violence or by the 68 percent of us that believe in... it, is a human right to fair housing and services

by making it nearly impossible to vote them out. This also affects our state economically, since businesses like Amazon, for example, are reluctant to come here due to failure of our legislators to act on public safety and equality. All we, as Ohioans are asking for is a fair fight for representation, our voices to be heard, our votes to count. I urged the committee to consider this within the map drawing process. Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration. Thanks. [applause]

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [01:23:34] Thank you very much. Callia Tellez.

Tellez [01:24:14] Good morning, co-chair, Sykes, thank you for this opportunity to speak. My name is Callia Tellez and I'm speaking today as the environmental policy fellow at the Ohio Environmental Council Action Fund and myself as a concerned citizen. I was born and raised in Dayton, but I currently live in Columbus. Unfortunately, there is no opportunity currently provided for Columbus residents to speak at a hearing during this process. However, I can speak in Dayton not only because of my lived experience, but because environmental injustices maintained by gerrymandering exist in every city across Ohio. Environmental injustice is the disproportionate exposure of communities of color and low-income communities to environmental hazards such as air pollution, toxic wastewater and lead exposure. A clear example of this is House District 39, where the majority of Black and Brown Daytonians reside. In these maps, I've overlaid House districts with environmental justice or EJ screen data. EJ Screen is an environmental justice mapping tool that combines demographic indicators with environmental hazards to arrive at a percentile score. The darker shades on the map indicate block groups with larger numbers of low income and People of color residents along with higher environmental risk exposures as compared to state averages. In other words, it accounts for demographic and environmental hazard indicators. As you can see in front of you, District 39 holds a disproportionate amount of blocks that are in the 95 to 100 percentile for Superfund proximity, lead paint exposure and national air toxic assessments cancer risk. The environmental injustices faced by residents in District 39 is unacceptable. Without a functioning and fair democracy. Ohio will continue to perpetuate environmental injustice. The passage of environmental protection laws should never become a partisan political tool, as if you are not debating real human lives in our communities. Under our current maps, Ohio has many districts that crack apart communities and connect disparate communities with wildly different environmental experiences and resource access. The deliberate cracking of communities dilutes the power Ohioans have to advocate for their right to clean air, safe drinking water and a fair democracy. For example, district lines cracks the communities surrounding parts of Trotwood, Fort McKinley, Fairview and North Riverdale. So while these communities in District 43 are experiencing the same environmental injustices as those in District 39, their district has pulled out to the Indiana border, diluting their voices with Ohioans who do not experience the same hazardous exposures. But if I, a young professional living in Columbus who has the privilege to drive here to Dayton, back to my hometown, because it is my job and one of the few people to talk to you today about the environmental racism your government perpetuates in Dayton, then that is a shameful illustration of this commission's attempt to be accountable to all Ohioans. The creation. [applause] The creation of fair and representative maps must center the critical voices of Black and Brown and low-income Ohioans who experience more environmental, health and social injustices. And when I say center their voices, I mean hear firsthand from those actually experiencing the injustices, which at minimum, means offering opportunity to testify outside of work hours, holding hearings in close proximity to at risk communities, extending the hearing timeline and having our commissioners actually attend the hearing. [applause] Ohioans overwhelmingly want clean air, healthy public lands, safe drinking water and a bold action on climate change. Our

legislature should reflect the will of the people. And when we have districts representative of our communities, not partisan interests, our environment and our communities win. Representatives elected by and for communities will know the problems they face, including shared environmental injustices. I urge you to consider this critical perspective when advocating for fair maps and equal districts in Ohio. Thank you. I'm happy to take any questions.

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [01:29:11] One question, on your environmental injustice you listed some items— lead paint was one what were the other two?

Tellez [01:29:19] Superfund Proximity and National Air Toxic Assessment Cancer Risk. These are all EJ Screen indices that can be found on the EPA's EJ Screen portal. Thank you. [applause]

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [01:29:44] Sheila Drennen. Sheila Drennen? Ken Picoult?

Picoult [01:30:17] Greetings. I appreciate the opportunity to testify this morning. Still morning. We're hearing a lot of the same kinds of things here today, and I think that's probably because it's the will of the people. That's why 70 percent of the voters of Ohio voted to create this commission. So what I want to talk about are safe districts. Our... our democracy, I would submit, needs competitive districts, competitive elections to work like it should. And right now it's not working very well. I think it's pretty clear. The Ohio people know this, that's why seven out of 10 of them voted to create this commission. That's why we're all here. In the 10 years since the last redistricting, 45 percent of the congressional votes in Ohio were cast for Democratic candidates. I know we're talking about state, but I'll get to that in a second. But Democrats only occupy... occupy one quarter of those seats. That's a clear distortion of the will of the people by the politicians who drew the maps. And since... and the main thing is, since 2012, not a single one of those 16 seats has changed parties, that's the definition... that's a clear distortion of the will of the people. And and it's the definition of safe, partisan, distorted districts. The same dynamic has played out in the statehouse. Republicans hold three quarters of the seats of the Ohio Senate and two thirds of the House. Those are also not fair representations of what the voters have asked for. So we've seen this play out in Montgomery County as well during the last decade. One House seat, 42, in the last election is a deeply red district in the south of the county, didn't get a Democratic candidate to enter the race. That's also happened a lot of times in the 39 District where we are right now, which is packed with close to 50 precincts that vote more than 90 percent Democratic. So in our region, we've seen Democratic candidates mount spirited campaigns in other gerrymandered districts against Republican candidates who barely show up but still win by healthy margins. So, these safe districts that I want to talk about deny voters their right to make meaningful choices in general elections. If the district is going to be won by a Republican by 10 or 20 points. Several things happen. One. It's really hard to get a qualified Democrat to run. Two, the only thing the incumbent has to worry about is a primary challenge from his or her right. Three, the candidates are pulled toward messages that play to the fringes of their party for the will of the vast majority of Ohioans who are more moderate on the issues is ignored. So, safe districts result in irrelevant elections, bad laws in Ohio— pushed by one party, gridlock in Washington and general disgust at our political system. We need more competitive races where good ideas get a true hearing. We need more competitive races where strong candidates of both parties are motivated to run. We need more competitive races to restore our faith in the ability of Ohio voters to have their voices heard. The people of Ohio have entrusted you to clean up this electoral mess. Please don't let us down. Thank you. [applause]

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [01:34:35] Thank you. Wendy Dyer.

Dyer [01:34:58] Hello, my name is Wendy Dyer, I live at 3813 Callaway Court in Bellbrook, Ohio. My house district is 73, my Senate district is 10, and my congressional district is 10. My comments are short because most of what I have to say has already been said more eloquently by someone else. However, I do want to reiterate one point. In the last six years, Ohioans have twice voted overwhelmingly to end partisan gerrymandering, the first time in November 2015, with 71 percent of the vote, the second time in May of '18, with 75 percent of vote. I realize that neither of these constitutional amendments talked about gerrymandering. They set up this commission and made rules about the process of redistricting. However, every person in this room knows that we, the Ohio voters, were voting to end gerrymandering and to thus provide fair representation to all Ohioans. [applause] As our elected officials, you must draw districts using the process defined in the Ohio Constitution by those amendments. You also must draw districts that are fair as the voters intended. You should not be looking to find ways to get around the rules. You should not be looking for loopholes. You should not be looking for ways to provide a safe seat for your political allies on either side of the... spectrum, you should not be planning to do this again in four years, the voters have spoken twice. Your duty, loyalty and responsibility must be to the citizens of Ohio, not your party's, not your donors and not a bunch of corporations. [applause]

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [01:36:51] Any questions? Thank you very much. Catherine Queener.

Queener [01:37:11] Thank you for being here. Thank you for listening. And thank you for allowing me to speak to you. My name is Catherine Queener. I vote in the Senate District 6 in House District 42 in the Centerville School District. If you overlaid all my political outlines, one on top of another, you would get a Venn diagram that would blow your mind. And I suspect that's true of everyone in this room. I would like to draw your attention to the issue of fair representation in my community. Ohio House District 42 is one of the five districts within Montgomery County, a county in which roughly 40 percent of voters are Black. Our five districts within Montgomery County were drawn to corral most of our Black voters into one of the five districts. This effectively means that our Black voters, 40 percent of Montgomery County, get 20 percent of the representation in Montgomery County. When you look at Ohio House District 42 on a map and my apologies, I did not bring a visual aid. I'm hoping you can look at it on a computer, as I did. When you look at Ohio House District 42 on a map, it is glaringly obvious that Jefferson Township and Trotwood had been drawn out to dilute their representation into District 43, overwhelmingly rural and White. The consequence of not fixing this problem includes reducing representation for a significant number of voters. I ask you to represent Ohioans who have twice voted to allow for fair redrawing of district maps. Again, I'm Catherine Queener. I live at 1758 Grant's Trail in Dayton, Ohio. Thank you very much. [applause]

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [01:40:00] Matthew Krog. Ryan Ivory.

Ivory [01:40:27] Greetings, Co-Chair Sykes and Secretary LaRose and fellow distinguished members of the commission. Thank you for allowing me to be here today to speak before you. I am Ryan C. Ivory and I'm here today on behalf of the National Association of Social Workers, Ohio Chapter Region 7, in which I am the director. And I say NASW believes that voting is the hallmark of a democracy. Yet we have seen a huge voting gap over the past 30 years as court decisions, voter suppression laws and

gerrymandering intentionally eroded the hard-won franchise, especially among marginalized citizens. NASW, believes that gerry... gerrymandering is a form of voter suppression, that ultimately disempowers communities, especially partisan gerrymandering, which is taking place in Ohio far too long, Ohio voters have the right to cast a meaningful ballot. Our ask today is that the commission ensure fair maps are drawn that reflect voter's dynamic and evolving preferences and maps that do not skew electoral outcomes in order to protect a particular party against changes in voter preferences. On behalf of NASW, Ohio Chapter and Region 7, we thank you for your time, leadership and commitment to ensure fair districts across the state of Ohio. [applause]

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [01:42:12] Derek Foward.

Foward [01:42:51] Good morning, Co-Chair Sykes. (Good morning.) Secretary LaRose. Commissioners, my name is Dr. Derek L. Foward, president of the Dayton Unit of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Well, I've served this community for the past 15 years in his leadership position. And also serve as vice president for the state of Ohio, for the NAACP and also serve in a couple of national positions, leadership positions nationally for the NAACP. And as I think about the redistricting process. And look at how it has an adverse effect on Black and Brown Americans. Has an adverse effect on poor White people. Has an adverse effect on many People of color. So when I think about the NAACP and how we have gone to market over these past five to seven years in terms of our 21st Century game changers, gerrymandering gives a very negative adverse effect on our way of life. You say, what do we mean? Economic sustainability. That's a chance to live the American dream for all. Every person will have equal opportunity to achieve economic success, sustainability and security. But when we continue to draw maps... that once again, I'm using this word adverse, because that's what it is, the adverse effect, on many Americans throughout the great Buckeye State of Ohio is shameful. When we look at the maps and think about how in, you know, the last decade, you know how now I want to be clear too, the NAACP is nonpartisan. The NAACP is nonpartisan, but however, we're highly political and are very engaged into the fabric of American society. So when we think about the demographic breakdown or the legislative makeup of the Ohio legislature. Being 54 percent Republicans. And about 46 percent African, I mean Democrats. But then when you think about the breakup of the entire state of Ohio, where you have 75 percent that occupy the Senate. Sixty five percent that occupy the House in terms of Republicans. One got to say to themselves, when can we as a state exercise leadership? When can we, as a state legislator—legislative body, the General Assembly, Ohio General Assembly exercise leadership or commission to exercise leadership to draw fair districts? Education. You know, a free, high quality public education for all, every child will receive free, high quality, equitable funded public pre-K and pre-K through education, followed by diverse opportunities for accessible, affordable vocational or university education. So when we think about education, our number two pillar, how can we achieve this, achieve that success when the districts are not drawn in a manner that we have our schools funded correctly? That's still maintains to be a problem for decades upon decades. When I think of last time in 2011 when the lines were drawn, they wanted to come down straight down the heart in the gut of Dayton, Ohio. They want to come straight down Hoover Avenue and split the Black vote, and, in fact, we were, you know, they were highly successful. Which is unfortunate. Because what it did, it took away one of our seats. As a Black man, I need representation. As Black people, we need representation. Health. Health quality [phone rings] OK Sorry about that, you know, health equality for all Americans, including, you know, high life and high-quality health care, everyone will have equal access to affordable, high quality health care. But as we know, people wanted to destroy the Affordable Care

Act. And that's primarily one side of the fence, one party. Public safety and criminal justice. Oh, Lord. Equitable dispensation of justice for all. Disproportionate incarceration, racially discriminatory sentencing guidelines, racially motivated policing strategies and racially influenced sentencing will end. And incarceration will be greatly reduced. We need to work towards that and we cannot work towards that, if we don't have the right people on the bus. Have you read the book, Jim Collins, Good to Great. We want to take our state from good to great. But we can't be good to great if we continue to practice gerrymandering tactics. We see Black and Brown men being slaughtered every day in the streets, and I'd be the first to say... I make zero excuses when Black on Black crime exist, I make zero excuses, so I'm the same way whether or that as a police officer attacking someone Black or whether that's a Black man attacking someone Black. But we need laws...how do we get those laws on the books, we get those laws on the books through this commission. Through drawing fair districts. Expanding voting rights and political representation. I believe that when our first vice president spoke a little while ago, she so eloquently stated about how the composition is made up in the statehouse. Is it equal? Is it just? Is there equality there? We ought to be ashamed about how we're going to market for the American people, for the great Buckeye's here. We're all Buckeyes, if you cut us we're all going to bleed the same red blood. So we need for you to go to market. To do what's right. For our last pillar, they're six pillars, our last pillar is expanding youth and young adult engagement. How can we get our youth engaged and involved? Even though we do, we have many youth programs. But if they're still not being represented right where laws are, where laws are made to be on the books in our legislature. It does no good. So we really call upon you to exercise leadership. Like Donehue. Boggs is not there, Secretary, LaRose, Vernon Sykes, Phil Plummer. Alex Bilcheck, Louis Blessing the third. We need for you to exercise leadership. And do what's right on behalf of all Americans within our Buckeye State. That's what we're calling upon you to do. To do the right thing, make the right call. Because they sure enough didn't do it in 2011. Sure didn't do it 10 years prior to that! How can we have one congressperson be in a seat for 20 years? Because, that's done because the the districts are drawn in such a manner that the person will forever hold their seat until the lines are drawn again. The same way with the composition of the legislature. You know, in the disparate impact. On, on the number of people who are representing Black people, Brown people, poor White people. Thank you for your time. We're just calling for when you do the right thing. Thank you [applause]

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [01:52:18] Thank you. Any questions? Toni Holmes.

Holmes [01:52:51] Greeting leaders, I am Toni Holmes, I am an Ohio real estate agent. I come and you all will hear jiggling in my voice as I'm passionate about this, I'm advocating for [inaudible] citizens. There was that of Dayton, Ohio. And the youth. OK, so we're speaking on... fair districts, right? What did it look like? What do fair districts look like? I tell you what fair districts [inaudible] Dayton, Ohio. Montgomery County. Hmm, Dayton public schools. I brung my daughter she just graduated from Dayton public school. She's back there. I brought her here for one particular reason. What do fair districts look like? I had a house to show. I had to cancel it because I had an e-mail saying we need you, we need your voice at this particular meeting. Because I advocate for many different areas, a single mother of three Black Dayton public, poverty, breaking chains like, all that, you know? So where do fair has.. I mean districts like for my daughter? If, as I canvass, back there this event, how many people of us [in audible] relatable, that been through the struggle, this fighting hard to get past, here. I think me and my daughter. I asked her the whole time I'm listening to it everyone, which they was marvelous, I watch, I'm watching my child just graduated from a Dayton public school. You know what she was doing on her phone the whole time? You know why? Because growing up Black in poverty, we are taught that

politics don't matter for us. Things going to happen to us no matter what. We are used to fighting. We are used to the struggle and we are used to surviving. But we are not knowledgeable about politics. That's why you get those lacks of votes, because you don't have people in the inner cities pushing it. It is not about Republican or Democrat. It's about putting their leader in there that cares for all. I know it's quite rare, but it can happen because they get dismissed. How do we advocate where we need to be advocated at? How do we raise awareness where it matters? Because right now it only matters with the wealth. You have poverty, middle class, y'all see me do this right? Because I don't believe in middle(?) class, I believe in poverty, inequality, that's it. When you go into those other communities, districts, their school teaches them about the importance of politics, laws, how to make a difference. We don't get taught that. All we get taught is how to go to college, hopefully, or get another job working our butts off. And we would never become on that level because it's not meant for us to be there. We're not taught to go make a difference, and if you want to hear— you want to make them here you?.. Go vote. Well, make them see you? Go speak. We not taught that. Pay opposition, right? And no one is ignorant to these results, not at all. Recidivism is real. So we have we have this map, right, and what we have always been taught is division. We're not taught collectively, so we fighting, what? Individually? That's it, we're looking at this map and I'm only looking at the map on this little thing that they gave me when I walked in, this little thing. Again, we are reminded how we segregated. That's it. Reminded, so we are reminded that we're alone again and going to remain what?.. uneducated? We learn and get taught the bare minimum. So you have this Dayton, Ohio with these fair districts, right? You have people going to jail, youth...they don't get no help. You sit there, you put a youth in Dayton in front of a judge, you know what they look? Black. Poverty. And, uneducated to the justice system. Easy [inaudible] right? Know why I'm able to say these things is because I was a victim of it...which is fine. I don't blame nobody but myself. I feel like God gave me and put me in those positions to be able to stand right here in front of you all today to advocate. To show it's a gap, it's not about this map, the map is nothing but a visual proof of segregation, like always. It's a reminder. Voting is a reminder. I was I just now started back voting, I stopped, I stopped voting because I was like, oh my God, my vote don't matter. It doesn't count. We, because we get hit hard all the time, whether we put whoever in a position or that seat...nothing is done. So we sit here and have these meetings, these these events just to hear us talk. We're just talking. When are we going to implement something that important to the communities, our communities? Because at the end of the day we all human. There is no red, blue, black, white, good district bad district...it's all human, imperfect humans. And once we start realizing that [applause] we can come together united to make a bigger difference, because right now we just talking. I'm Toni Holmes and I'm the Ohio voter. Thank you. [applause]

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [01:59:44] Thank you. LaPearl Winfrey.

Winfrey [02:00:03] My name is Dr. LaPearl Logan Winfree, you've heard earlier from my sorors [?], I miss Betty White, who is a fellow member of the Ohio of Delta's Ohio redistricting cohort. I come to you today representing Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Incorporated, the Dayton alumni chapter. Political awareness, and that's just the sorors [?] I think we have some other members in the other room, I don't know if they're able to join us on this side so they we can all be together. Political awareness and involvement is one of the programmatic thrusts of Delta Sigma Theta. So we thank you for this opportunity to address the very consequential matter of redistricting and fair districts. We believe that the people should choose their representatives, not the elected officials, choosing whom they will represent. The latter leads to extreme marginalization and an imbalance in power, as you have heard repeatedly. Gerrymandering has happened under the control of both

parties, both major political parties in the past, and it is not a practice that should be revisited under any circumstances. That is why Ohioans in all 88 counties voted twice to amend the state constitution, as you certainly aware, to improve the process of drawing district lines both for Ohio legislative districts and for U.S. Congress. Some years ago, the average Ohioan probably did not know what gerrymandering was, let alone care much about the redistricting process, but now your constituents are paying attention. We know that it is harder to draw a gerrymandered map than to draw a fair map. This year, citizens are taking part in a mapmaking competition sponsored by Common Cause, the League of Women Voters and other strategic partners. This competition will produce fair maps drawn in accordance with the new redistricting rules. The legislature thus can no longer pretend that the maps they produce are the best or the only possible options.

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [02:02:34] Excuse me just a minute, ladies. You may come forward if you like.

Winfrey [02:02:41] Thank you. Certainly a presence in numbers.

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [02:02:47] I'd like the colors

Winfrey [02:02:51] are the ladies in?

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [02:02:56] I'm an Alpha myself. All right,

Winfrey [02:03:00] The fine nine[?] Is in the house. (Yes), bipartisan maps would be the best outcome for the people of Ohio. And accordingly, that is our expectation and goal. The members of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. represent more than 1000 chapters worldwide. We are individually and collectively engaged in educating the community about this important process. Additionally, we are here to assist citizens across the state of Ohio and having their voices heard. I thank you for your time and consideration and look forward to hearing how you plan to accomplish fair maps.

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [02:03:42] Thank you very much, [applause] appreciate it. Jerome Sutton.

Sutton [02:04:08] Thank you for coming today. And allowing us to speak. My name is Jerry Sutton, I live in the village of Yellow Springs, consequently Ohio 73rd House, 10th Senate, and 10th U.S. Congressional District. I would like to start by offering an amen to what all my fellow speakers said today they did a great job. I wish to emphasize the issue of one person, one vote. Why? A few years ago, while I was at a League of Women Voters meeting, my Ohio State representative pointed his finger at me and said, Jerry, your vote doesn't count. You live in Yellow Springs, a liberal village in a very conservative county, it will never count. I was chagrined. However, upon reflection, I knew he was right. My vote did not have weight within Ohio. He caused me to take out a Republican primary ballot the next time because there were more people I wanted to vote against than I thought my vote could help. So, I don't propose that Yellow Springs, as unique as it truly is, should be its own district. But, you know, I would use it as an example of the larger issue and I'll address the current congressional district is the problem. We've heard before that we have the last presid... presidential election, President Biden won fift... 46 percent of the vote. And that was made up of seven of our most populous counties of the largest cities primarily. He won those seven counties. He did not win any of the other 81 counties. One may ask then, if he got 46 percent, why aren't Democrats represented in Congress or in the statehouse in a similar proportion instead of 25 percent or 33 percent? Why not 40 or 50 percent? And

we know the reason we've heard that g-word a number of times today. In the 2011 redistricting effort, none of the Ohio districts contained... the Ohio Democratic districts, by default, contained a...an entire integral county. They all contained fragments of counties, one fragment, two fragments, up to five fragments of different counties. So, what I'm asking is, you have that the 15 and 18 amendments to our Constitution, they set forth some criteria, one of which at the congressional level, is let's have integral, each district have an integral county. And I would ask that you look at that and then if the population supports it, have it as a separate county, have it as a separate U.S. congressional district. It's a tough job you have. I don't envy you, you have competing requirements, you have long, boring meetings,

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [02:08:25] Not so boring, not so boring.

Sutton [02:08:27] But I commend you for your activities and thank you for the opportunity.

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [02:08:32] Thank you. [applause] Lindee Keaton, Valarie Lee, Peter Maxwell. Debra Saunders.

Saunders [02:09:42] Good morning.

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [02:09:45] Good morning.

Saunders [02:09:49] I'm Deborah Saunders and I reside in Dublin, Ohio, in the Columbus area. And my Ohio legislative districts are Senate 16 and House 21. As a voter in Ohio, I have been waiting for this time to come. Supported by very clear and overwhelming voter declarations in both 2015 and 2018, certainly a topic that we've heard frequently in the messages today from voters, you know, we want and expect appropriate change to occur as a redistricting process is conducted with a recently released 2020 census data. Unlike the clandestine, secretive process that occurred in 2011, we call on this Ohio redistricting commission to meet the redistricting obligations that promote fairness in voter representation within the districts, transparency in the process, and also sufficient time for the people of Ohio to review the proposed district maps and provide comment. The districting that occurred in 2011 impacted where I live, resulting in nonsensical mapping. State Route 33, which runs directly in front of my property, is in a different House district, 24, than mine, I'm in 21. If you look at the map, you will see that it resembles kind of a lollipop carve out where the roadway is just a thin stick of the lollipop. There are no voters there. There are no homes there. And it leads to a group of residences that are what I call the candy of the lollipop. And it's the, obviously the purpose of the bizarre mapping it. The obvious and sole purpose was to create a narrow conduit for what I call landgrab just north of me. These districting practices have divided neighborhoods. They provide no continuity for community, and they speak loudly of special interest for partisan politics. These practices have had great negative impact on our lower income and marginalized communities within Franklin County. We know that redistricting can be equitable and can represent the voters of Ohio fairly. And this occurs when districts are structured sensibly without rouge carve-outs, extensive chops or splits or stretched over a large territory. Fairness occurs when each vote does matter because either party has a chance at winning, because when our votes count, either party has a chance of winning. Unlike what has experienced from the last redistricting where election outcomes have been known long before Election Day. In this age of greater data availability, with data analyzes and modeling, considerations for the fair composition of each district and partisan balance of districts in our state can occur readily—we know that. I stand with my fellow constituents in Ohio and I implore this commission, as we do, to demonstrate a strong willingness to work

with the mandates of the voters. And by working with us, providing a redistricting process that is evident and understandable, is fair for each voter, enabling every vote to count and allows a public review of the proposed maps before moving to legislative approval. Thank you.

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [02:13:38] Thank you. [applause] Any questions? Thank you very much. David Youngkin

Youngkin [02:14:01] Good morning. (Good morning.) Thank you for letting me speak today. My name is Dave Youngkin. I live in Washington Township, Montgomery County, in the great state of Ohio. House District 42, Senate District 6. My background is a business owner. I operated my heavy construction equipment company in this area for 25 years. I'm not accustomed to speaking publicly, but I'm going to try and I'm going to cut it short, I know time's getting short because I can't help, at this point, but echo a lot of points that have been made eloquently and passionately so far. First point I'd like to make is regarding an earlier comment. In 2020, almost 50 percent of the vote for the national presidency was 50 percent, Democrats a little less. In 2010, it was over 50 percent. So it's not OK for one party to rig elections in Ohio. We're all clear eyed that districts have been shaped shamefully gerrymandered. Lines are drawn to create particular outcomes by packing groups of like-minded voters exclusively into a few districts or spreading them out across many to dilute voting power. The candidate in the red district has to be the most to the right, candidate in the blue district, has to be the most to the left. Extreme candidates don't compromise for the greater good. [applause] Or they won't get reelected. Polarization gets worse. Anger and hostility towards the other group grows uglier and faith in our government sinks lower and lower. It's tempting to create district maps that help one's political party have more power. In the long run, what's really important? Power? Or protecting our sacred democracy? Thank you for your time and hearing today how anxious we all are for fair representation as intended by our Constitution and precious for those who have sacrificed so much to protect that right. It's my sincere hope that this committee will make the brave choice. To reverse this painful divisiveness and set a new standard of fairness and inclusiveness that will begin to reunite, reunite us all. Thank you.

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [02:17:19] Thank you for very much. Any questions? At this time I did notice a Senator did come in, an additional senator, Mr. Senator Huffman. Are there any other state legislators here? Thank you Senator. Charlene Baylis. Ellen Bensen. Helen Geyer.

Geyer [02:18:34] Members of the commission, good morning, thank you for hearing my testimony. My name is Helen Guyer and I live in Bellbrook. My neighborhood is a mix of Republican and Democratic voters, but we have consistently had Republican representation over the last decade because of gerrymandering. Let's start with the baseline understanding. I think it's pretty clear from all the testimony today that not only my district, but all of Ohio is egregiously gerrymandered. That needs to change now. I want the blatant gerrymandering and the extremist archly conservative legislature that has resulted from it, gone. Truly competitive districts are necessary and vital to a healthy democracy. We must have fair districts because it is the only way we can be ensured that we will have good government. Without any competition, corrupt incumbents who could not care less about the majority of their constituents, keep getting reelected because their reelection is always guaranteed. These legislators have no interest in, and accordingly do nothing to help, all but a handful of their constituents. Instead, they are strictly focused on pandering to the extreme hardcore base that votes in primaries in order to keep themselves in power. The result of that gerrymandering has been a legislature that does

not represent the interests of my community, the women of Ohio seeking to exercise their right to reproductive freedom. I want to see fair districting in Ohio because I want fair representation for the women of Ohio. The election of corrupt, archconservative and power-hungry individuals inevitably leads to extremism in legislation. And indeed, we saw an abrupt right turn in the way the legislature started legislating after 2011. A prime example of this extremism was the legislation that banned abortions in Ohio after six weeks of pregnancy at a time when most women don't even know they are pregnant yet, which was based on rank ignorance, religious extremism that has no place in government and ignoring very basic science. It also ignored the will of the majority of Ohio voters who believe that abortion should be safe and legal and that the exercise of that right should not be encumbered with senseless, needless and thoroughly unreasonable restrictions. This legislation only came about because of gerrymandering. I submit that no legislature, elected through a truly competitive process, would have passed this law because such legislators are actually answerable to their constituents in a way that few legislatures, legislators in Ohio are today. I must also say that so far the redistricting process in Ohio has not been encouraging. It's clearly being done once again in a rather opaque and clandestine manner. This commission was only formed at the very absolute last possible moment. The first meeting was a nonevent in which nothing was done. Half the members are only here today by proxy. So, so far, not good. I hope to see better and many have commented on the fact that all of these hearings are during working hours, I had to rearrange my schedule to be here today. That's not encouraging at all. This process must be utterly transparent to have any validity whatsoever. [applause] Otherwise, it will be mired in litigation and Ohioans will again have to wait for a truly representative legislature. They should not have to wait any longer. I urge you, in the strongest possible terms, redistricting in Ohio must be done fairly, transparently and in a nonpartisan manner and must result in competitive districts. Otherwise, it will be a completely pointless exercise, except for the extremists who will be the only winners. Make every district competitive. Let fair competition reign in Ohio so its voters win. Thank you. [applause]

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [02:23:37] Thank you. Jeff Hardenbrook.

Hardenbrook [02:23:37] Good day, Co-chair Sykes and LaRose and other commission members and the general public. Thank you for being present. We have a great country. You have a very important opportunity to impact the state of Ohio and our future going forward and for future generations. There's so many things that challenge us today. And we've just seen in the last year how fractured and how delicate our democracy actually is. And many of the speakers today have have spoken to you about how the gerrymandered districts have pushed moderates out of our political process and empowered extremism, and the tension, the stress, the divisiveness, the polarization that has brought about and heightened both in our state and in our nation. You have a great opportunity to exercise leadership with the power the citizens of the state have given to you. I, I do have a little bit of testimony to present to you in the form of a congressional map, a U.S. congressional map. I used the calculator, the population data available online and the general ideas of keeping district counties contiguous unless population exceeded the the threshold set by dividing our our population state population by 15 districts, basically. The resulting map I have is is fairly simple. It looks like to me it would result in five to six party fairly safe districts for each party and probably two or three or four that would districts for US Congress that might be in play. My point is I did it in a night with a calculator. Anything that's available online, as far as population, the three largest counties in our state, Franklin, Cuyahoga and Hamilton, of course, would have to be split. Each of those congressional districts are going to represent roughly three quarter, three quarter million Ohio citizens. So you're going to have those three counties split. That's a given. But the

map I did only has only 9 of our 88 counties split. That's a much better map than we had from 2011. During a break or something, I go out and get enough copies to present and leave with your your clerk. This is not, it doesn't have to be, it doesn't take a lot. I'm just telling you, it doesn't take a lot to provide fair representation to the citizens of Ohio and basically that's all we're saying. Do the job the citizens gave to you in the voting that we've done on these two amendments. Do your job and thank you for your time and wish you health in the coming years.

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [02:27:17] Mr. Hardenbrook, you may also submit that map online at the Web site. Thanks. We'd appreciate it. Nathaniel Lathy.

Lathy [02:27:26] Hello to all of you. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak. My name is Nathaniel Lathy. I live in central Ohio, Hilliard. Being here, it's great to be in Dayton. I was in Xenia a week ago with Green County Republicans. It's always great to be involved. I know some if you want one person on this board that's seen me at a meeting before I have asked him a question so he knows I like to stay involved. But I would like to say that it is a thrill to be here. It this, I've never been to this college before the first week of college, it's great stuff. Reminds me my first week back in 86 at Ohio State because of all of you, I'm not embarrassed to mention the year. But also I just want to say that I also like what Maylene Miller said, but I think this, I agree with her. I think one problem is, though, it's only half right. All all these speakers, both parties do not represent the people. That is the problem. And that is the issue, not this redistricting district redistricting thing, this gerrymandering. In its head elections the Democrats blew it. You had a governor who was elected with more than 70 percent of the vote and he did not get reelected. And you lost a seat on the apportioned board. The National Health Care Act gave the Republicans the apportionment board. So it is not any issue of gerrymandering or redistricting. We have two parties. They're not accountable to the people. The primary process often involves people with no challengers. I heard about the heartbeat bill. You know why it took so long for the heartbeat bill to get passed? A Republican governor vetoed it twice. It came another Republican governor, and he put in place these mandates that are strangling small businesses. And now we want to open up our economy. Both parties are poor. And I think it's ridiculous to try to make it one tilted more toward the Democrats. And that's what this is an effort to do. Both parties are bad. We do not want a blue state. California and New York are laughing stocks. Why would you want to make it like that? I speak for the businessmen who could not make these meetings. I speak for the unborn who have no say. They are people too. We have the right to work. They have the right to life, life, liberty, pursuit of happiness. That's what this country was founded on. We want liberty, not so radical agenda. And I don't see any example of moderates doing anything to stop radicals putting these things coming in from Washington and so forth. So I asked all of you to continue with the process. I asked people who are not happy to get involved. Sure, life isn't fair. I don't like going out in 85, 90-degree weather knocking on doors when no one answers, when people want to watch their made for TV Olympics and not talk about who's running for Congress. I don't have a congressional representative right now. He retired and went off to the Chamber of Commerce, so we have to run, but people don't want to talk about it. I want to talk about it. These people want to talk about it. We need to get involved. And I'm going to continue to get involved, going to these meetings. I also think gun control is an important right. It's a freedom. My heart goes out to anyone who's had problems with addiction or that they have been victims of a home invasion. But we need rights to defend ourselves from these evils. That's one of our rights. We need honest elections. We should be having paper ballots with the problems of these machines. It makes me sick to think that Trump won this state by eight points, but he may have won it by 15. We need a better count. [laughter] We need we have fraudulent states. I'm sorry. I take this...

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [02:31:41] ...He has a right...

Lathy [02:31:42] I ask for additional time.

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [02:31:43] He has a right.

Lathy [02:31:44] I sat and listened to these people for an hour and a half. They can listen to me for four minutes. I think it's fair that we have our say in this election and we had a say in the presidential election. We want we want any kind of resistance to Washington that we can get. And I don't want to go the same way as these other people as these other states have. They're laughing stocks, the audits need to go in for all 50 states. Also on the issue of drugs, open borders are a big problem, Ohio needs to be doing its part to help defend the border in Texas and New Mexico. That'll keep the drugs out and think about the rights of Christians too, that's the one religion is acceptable in this country to put down. But I'm a Christian. I'm proud to be a traditional Catholic. And I'm going to continue to fight for the unborn. I'm going to fight for the traditional family. And I think that's what needs to be done. We've heard a lot of talk today about all these things that need to be done to change the system, it looks to me like they're trying to rip it to one party. But I have to ask you, are the Democrats really getting the job done. These, these...all we keep hearing about is the problems and the problems still exist. What about why can't we if we have two Republican bodies in the legislature and a Republican governor who said he supported right to work, why don't we have right to work law? Why am I represented by a union that does not show my interests at all? That doesn't seem right. But the thing is, I keep fighting for what's right. I don't worry about what's fair and what's not fair. I think more people in office who are not politicians, they only care about getting elected. We need people who want to go out and meet with the people. I's a guy (?) for running for governor in the primary side. That's what he's doing. He's putting himself on the line. Maybe more people can run. More things can do. It's not fair the culture is tilted toward the left. So I turn the TV off. We have propagandists out there in the media. They're not media. They're just putting an agenda forth. So I again ask for you, freedom. That's what we need. And I will take any questions.

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [02:34:08] Are there any questions?

Secretary of State Frank LaRose [02:34:14] Thank you, Co-Chair Sykes and [inaudible], as the chief elections officer for the state of Ohio. I think I should maybe correct a couple of things that just ask you if you're aware of the facts.

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [02:34:25] Be careful, we're not here to debate.

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [02:34:28] Sure. Understood.

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [02:34:29] Please.

Secretary of State Frank LaRose [02:34:31] You mentioned that there should be paper ballots. 100 percent of the ballots cast in Ohio have a paper trail that is auditable. You mentioned that there is problems with voting machines. I hope that you're aware of the voting machines in Ohio are never connected to the Internet. They're prohibited by law from being connected to the Internet and that they're inspected and certified by both Republicans and Democrats before each election. You mentioned the need for an audit. I hope that you're aware that in November of last year we conducted a post-election audit,

as we do, following every election conducted by both Republicans and Democrats. And when we did, there was an accuracy rate found of ninety-nine point nine eight percent when we compared the paper trail to the electronic record. Were you aware of those things, sir?

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [02:35:12] Please, no questions to him. He's here to give information to us. You could give information. No questions to him, please. Thank you.

Secretary of State Frank LaRose [02:35:21] Thank you, sir.

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [02:35:22] Thank you. Michael Eckert. We have come to the last witness. OK. Yes, yes, yes, absolutely. Let me ask I was going to ask, is there anyone else that would like to speak here today? Make sure we have your witness slips, can you come forward, please?

off mic [02:36:19] Can we have your witness.

Donna Long [02:36:20] Oh, yes, yes, yes.

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [02:36:27] If we could take the time now, may I collect all the witnesses slips that we have left, anybody else that wanted to speak? Because we're going to need to cut this off, I have, we have to make Cincinnati yet today, so. So I assume that we have all of the witness slips. Thank you very much. And if you want to speak, if you could just raise your hand when we finish, we'll make sure you have an opportunity, please.

Donna Long [02:37:10] Good afternoon and thank you so much for the time. My name is Donna Long. And today I'm representing YWCA Dayton, where I serve as director of advocacy and outreach. I'm also a member of the YWCA Ohio Council, a coalition of 14 sister YWCAs across the state championing women's rights and human dignity. We are dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women and promoting peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all. The YWCA is the oldest and largest multicultural organization promoting solutions to enhancing the lives of women, girls and families. And like you, transparen..., transparency and fairness are important to us. And I am appreciative to have the opportunity to weigh in on this process. I'm here to testify in favor of fair maps in Ohio. This year we have an opportunity to do right by our communities. These maps will make decisions for political actions and advocacy for the next ten years. In a rapidly changing Ohio, we need fair representation so that our communities can survive and thrive. In Ohio, YWCA has a legacy. We serve many marginalized people focusing on childcare and housing as our main priorities and eliminating racism. Women, especially women of color are particular impact by redistricting. We hope that the redistricting, redistricting, redistricting reforms of 2015 and 2018 will help curate fair maps, but intend to keep a watchful eye on this process. We are constituents and we are advocates. Transparency and fairness is important to us. We advocate for fair mapping for the following reasons. The last 10 years of political decisions did not accurately represent the growing Asian Americans, Black Americans or Latino Americans in Ohio, leaving these populations susceptible to unfair policies. Fair maps will provide healthy competition for politicians who have been sitting comfortably in the process for far too long, appealing to the fringe. And it will introduce new actors' interests to represent new groups of people for public governance. And third, transparency is a right that should be afforded all Ohioans in the political process of public governance. At YWCA, we focus on the well-built, well-being of

women of color and eliminating misogyny that happens all too often to disproportionately impact this demographic due to the policies in which they are not considered. According to the census, Ohio's growth in concentrated areas is due to part... in part to Black, Asian and Latino communities. These are populations for whom we advocate. Who needs are often overshadowed and left out of the political process. Their needs and desires... desires should have adequate fighting chance and political process, and their voices represented at the table. Because we service these communities, we can help the commission identify where they are as communities of local interest. In light of the most recent attempts to change voter laws, voting opportunities, anti-protests, bills and other forms of undemocratic legislation which therein the very sanctity of our democratic process, we at YWCA, Dayton and the YWCA Ohio Council feel very strongly in favor of fair mapping. I can answer any questions,

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [02:41:19] Any questions? [applause] thank you very much. Mary Jo Groves.

Groves [02:41:38] Hello, thank you for your attention and thank you for allowing me to speak, Mr. LaRose, I'd like to thank you for your wonderful use of facts and evidence. I am here not as a Black or Brown person. I'm not Hispanic. I'm neither Asian. I have no organized religion, I subscribe to at this point. I am here, not in my professional garb. I am here, though, as a physician with my experience to direct a challenge to each of you, and I'm dressed in ordinary human garb because that's what I am going to treat each of you to consider as you make this decision. So many people have articulated so well the concerns of the 70 percent plus people who voted in Ohio twice now to get fair legislative districts. I also support the rights of the man to whom, with whom most of this room disagrees, for his right to express himself and also to be heard with his vote. That's what we're here for. So let me share with you what I'm what I would like to say as a physician. I have had the privilege in many decades, over many decades of practicing in the Springfield area where I live, and the privilege of helping people live longer and better lives. I've also had the privilege of caring for people at the end of their lives. And while it might surprise you to know that 80 percent of us are not going to go quickly, there's a myth in the public that we're all going to die boom like that. Fact is, only 20 percent of us or so go that way. The other 80 percent have a fair amount of time at the end to consider their lives. And I'd like to challenge each of you as individuals today to consider what this decision is going to mean to you for your own personal integrity, the rest of your lives, and specifically at the end of your lives. So I'd like you to think for a moment about Ebenezer Scrooge being warned about what the future might look like for you. And I'd like to tell you this, as a person who sat at the bedside of many people as they're dying. People don't get excited about the things they wish they'd done better. They get excited, they get upset. They're in crisis because of the things they wish they had done better. So as you make this decision, which for many of you may be the most momentous decision of your lives, I'm going to challenge you, will you and your integrity at the end of your life say I perpetuated the brokenness that I found? Or will you indeed, with gratitude, joy and the clarity that comes at the end of life, say I left the world a better place. Thank you for your time. [applause]

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [02:44:39] Melinda Zimpher.

Zimpher [02:44:44] Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Melinda Zimpher. I live in West Chester, Ohio, and I'm speaking as an individual, not as part of any organization. I'm a mother, a grandmother. And my career has been centered around writing... teaching, writing, interpretation of composition and literature at a university level. And I've been the owner of my small of a small business, my own public

relations and marketing company. Now that the 2020 census data has been returned, you have the opportunity to create new districts that better reflect the political preferences of Ohio voters. Please create fair districts that allow voters to select our legislators rather than those safe districts that allow legislators, legislators to choose their voters. The Republican Party has held a trifecta of power in Ohio for 23 of the last 30 years. You dominated the governor's seat, the Senate and the House. Is our state district maps have become safer for Republicans. I'm sorry to say that our state legislature has become increasingly more radical. What Ohio what have Ohioans received lately during these these last few years? A pandemic response initially lauded nationwide for its compassionate common sense. But it was derailed, stopped in its tracks due to pressure by selfish citizens and far right legislators more concerned about their personal rights to not wear a mask, then they were about being good neighbors and doing their part to save the lives of innocent babies, the sick and the elderly. Ohio now has more than 20,000 fatalities from covid-19, and we have had the keys in our hands from last spring to flatten the curve. This is not been a good job. What else has happened lately during Republican dominance in Ohio? Legislators added clauses to voting laws that made it more difficult for minorities and the working poor to vote. Lawmakers have passed gun laws that expand concealed carry rights versus legislation that would help stem gun violence. And legislators passed HB 6, a nuclear energy buyout law that is not only a billion-dollar tax on Ohioans to prop up nuclear power and quash green energy solutions, but it's been the focus of a 60 m... 1-million-dollar bribery and fraud case that's being investigated by the FBI. Shameful. This all comes at a time when the entire world as it urgently concerned about the harmful effects of carbon emissions and are warming changing climate. Majority Ohio legislators are burying their heads in the sand by refusing to acknowledge the urgency to act, to mitigate climate change and take advantage of the chance to create many, many thousands of green, sustainable manufacturing jobs that could help ensure a brighter future for our children and our grandchildren. When one political party rules with impunity... impunity, democracy falters. So does creativity and innovation. And as we see, ethics. Creating voting districts for Ohioans and fair congressional districts will help ensure that we get the smartest, most creative and ethical lawmakers on board no matter the political party. I asked you today... ask you today to create voting districts that reflect the geography, political and racial makeup of people who live here. We need fair districts that encourage voters to participate in our system, not suppress them or prevent them from voting. When more people are empowered to participate in the political process, we'll build a stronger representative, representative democracy and a better chance for unity. I urge all Ohioans to educate themselves about these issues, study the redistricting maps and weigh in about redistricting too. Thank you for being part of our new solution to unify Ohioans. [applause]

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [02:49:45] Thank you, at this time, having no further witness slips, I want to thank you all for... Oh. Ms Grace Dean,

Dean [02:50:09] Hello, my name is Grace Dean. I am the daughter of state representative Bill Dean and I'm not representing anyone. I was just told, you know, I need to come here because this was important and I believe in that. And so I have just been listening to what everyone's had to say for the past three hours. And a lot of it I didn't agree with and some of it I did agree with. You know, when I hear about I just got done last night, I was at Miami Valley South Hospital witnessing my best friend give birth to her baby. So when I hear women talk about the right to abortion, it makes me very, very sad to know that women want to support that. But I still support their right to say it and I support it up here to say it. And so while I'm listening to a lot of people and I see the signs that says fair districts, I'm listening to people and it sounds really, really great. Like, of course, you want fair districts

no matter what side you're on. And I heard a lot of people talk about how they want everyone to reach across the aisle and work together. And so I almost believed it until the man back there was speaking and they all laughed at him. And that wasn't fair because everyone else got their time to speak up here and nobody laughed at them and everyone gave them the respect that they deserved until someone says something that they didn't agree with. So they don't want fair, they want an advantage. And as a young person who's twenty-three, I almost believed what they were saying too, because fair sounds good, fair districts, it sounded good. But then I realized they showed their hand when they laughed at someone who didn't think the same way as them. They didn't want to reach across the aisle. I was outside when someone was talking. They called Republicans idiots. It's not fair. They want an advantage. And so as a young person looking at this and seeing this incredible display of honestly immaturity, when you're listening to someone voice their opinion about something, it's not fair what they want. They just want it advantage. So I would just, you know, hold people accountable. If you want fair, then that means listening to other people's sides of what they believe. And so if you really want that, you have to have it for free speech. You have to have it for elections, too. And if you don't want it for free speech, but you want it for elections, then you probably don't actually truly believe that. So that's all I have to say.

Co-Chair, Senator Vernon Sykes [02:52:40] Thank you. Thank you all for your testimony and your time here today. I'd like to say to the members of the commission, are there any comments that anyone would like to make at this time? If not. We have been duly challenged by our oaths of offices and by the expressions of the constituents of the citizens of Ohio, we are now adjourned.