

**TESTIMONY OF:**

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**PRESENTED TO:**

2021 OHIO REDISTRICTING COMMISSION  
OHIO STATEHOUSE  
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**Columbus, Ohio September 14, 2021** – Hello, I’m Debra Saunders. I live here in Dublin, and my current Ohio Legislative districts are House 16 and Senate 21. I join the remarkable number of fellow Ohioans who have felt an imperative, a compelling purpose, to testify to this Commission over these last several weeks. It speaks to the passion, commitment, and civic responsibility Ohio voters feel, regarding this critical initiative that will impact lives on a day-to-day basis.

There have been well-supported technical arguments on the shortfalls of the majority-approved working maps as they relate to the Article XI of the Ohio Constitution, and fervent testimony by impassioned citizens and leaders speaking to the peril, these maps will bring to their neighborhoods and communities, particularly for the underserved, and people of color. I add my voice of opposition to the proposed maps. If I look at where I live near the junction of Dublin and Upper Arlington, an area becoming much more diverse, merging the entire west side of Franklin County, a metropolitan population, to the whole of Union County, a primarily rural area, demonstrates what appears as a purposeful intent to neutralize Senate district votes not aligned to what would be a super majority. And for the House, a different approach was taken: districts were chopped to weaken the power of voting and minimize the impact that an aggregate of votes can bring.

We have heard there has been a great amount of work happening behind the scenes since last Thursday, by democratic and republican staff members, pouring over revisions of the maps.

We’ve heard this is the time where significant work can be done to find a middle ground. Yet I keep returning to a poignant comment offered by Leader Sykes last Thursday. She said the legislative body has been through this before, where a proposal is offered as an extreme, a provocation in fact, and through the process, becomes only marginally better if at all, never finding center because it began too far from midline and sufficient concessions will never be made to get there. It feels like that’s what we have here. Will the majority members concede 10 or more seats in the proposed House map to reach proportional representation, with a similar concession for the Senate? It seems to be an immense chasm to cross. I urge this commission to consider strongly, the maps presented by the Democratic Caucus, as the foundational documents on which to build.

We the voters of Ohio moved together as a bipartisan constituency and declared that we expect gerrymandering to end. We are holding on to hope that this Commission can find that same spirit.

Thank you.