

Written Testimony to Ohio Redistricting Commission
September 13, 2021

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide a written testimony. My name is K. (Cheena) Srinivasan, the name within parentheses being a nickname that I go by informally. I live in Upper Arlington and vote in District 24 of the Ohio House of Representatives.

I would like to draw your attention to the issue of the seemingly unnatural boundaries between many of the Commission's proposed Ohio House districts in Columbus. While this problem is most evident to me, it seems to be also related to larger deficiencies in the Commission's proposed redistricting maps for the Ohio House and Ohio Senate.

I work at OSU, and have done so for many decades. The OSU community, consisting of its students, and employees who live in nearby areas, seems to have been split up into multiple House districts, including districts 7, 8, and 11. The artificial nature of the boundaries between these districts is also very puzzling, involving as it does complex intrusions between adjacent districts. It seems that the net result is that segments of the OSU community have been split up and merged with surrounding communities with very different economic, cultural, and political perspectives. The overall result is that the voices and concerns of the OSU community, a well-defined community of interest, would be diluted significantly in the proposed redistricting.

While I have stated my concerns specifically with reference to the OSU community, the shortcomings noted above seem to be symptomatic of a larger problem with the Commission's approach to drawing district boundaries in urban areas. The consequences of not fixing the problem would be a continuation of the current overall situation of a lopsided representation of the interests of rural, suburban and urban communities in the Ohio House and Senate.

Analysis of the overall redistricting maps by a well-regarded software application indicates that the proposed House redistricting scores low on compactness, very low on competitiveness of the proposed districts as well as on proportional representation, and low on the representation of minority interests. Alternative maps that have been provided to the commission, including the winners of a mapping competition held by the Fair Districting Coalition, do much better on all of these metrics and would provide good alternative solutions. A similar situation holds for the proposed redistricting maps for the Ohio Senate.

I urge the Commission to look at these alternative approaches to see how best the interests of all citizens of Ohio may be represented in the redistricting initiative. Clearly, based on the proposed maps, that does not seem to have been the goal of the Commission to date. Considering the strong voter support of a less partisan approach to redistricting, Commission members would gain long term by being less partisan in their approach.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my interest

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