

To the Commissioners, and to the Chairs, thank you for creating the time and space for Ohioans to make their voices heard on the incredibly critical issue of redistricting. I want to begin by acknowledging the effort that was made to give us time to prepare testimony as well as the multiple hearings you have held for us to make our thoughts known to you. Thank you.

My name is Sarah Warner, and I sit on the Board of Directors of the League of Women Voters of Ohio where I serve in advocacy as well as voter services. I am your constituent--formally of Cincinnati, but currently in Columbus (House district 18 and Senate district 15) as I attend The Ohio State University for dual degrees in law and public policy, but regardless of the city I reside in I have worked hard to make sure that my community is empowered to have their voices heard—at the ballot box, and at the Statehouse. I have spent years registering people to vote with the League of Women Voters, serving at the polls, and training others to interact with their legislators in order to share the tools for change and empowerment, and allowing communities to engage with their democracy in meaningful ways.

Allowing that engagement to continue in a meaningful way is why I am writing this testimony to you today. Ohioans spoke to you through their vote, they voted for reform. Ohioans also speak to you in their vote of party- over the last decade average there is a 45-55 split D-R, but the current proposed map does not appear to reflect the state so much as it does the current makeup of the statehouse. I noticed while zooming in in various places in greater Columbus alone, it appears that there are sections of certain streets that were simply drawn around, or a few blocks here and there encircled and given to the district next door. It seems that despite being redrawn, the new maps still crack communities into pieces for the sake of holding onto a party or majority.

The reason it matters that you give Ohioans fair maps, maps that reflect more accurately the state that they live in, and more accurately represent who Ohioans are is because that means you can empower them to plug in YOU better. They will be more able to engage in their democracy, not just at the state, but at the federal level. Please take it from someone who has spent countless hours speaking to people about their vote and their census on the streets, in classrooms, in bars, in prisons, in shelters, on campuses, in grocery stores, and beyond: It is difficult to convince an individual or a community that their vote matters when they do not see it reflected in their statehouse either in form or function. It is difficult to encourage participation in the vote when an individual does not see “the point” because they don’t think that their vote or their representative’s vote will be heard. It matters when you allow gerrymandering. It matters when you allow a supermajority. It matters when you allow votes to not count, it matters when you break faith with your voters. It matters because your voters lose their faith in more than just their legislators, and their statehouse. They lose their faith in their VOTE.

The issue of this mapmaking process, and the fairest map possible that I hope emerges from it is larger than partisan politics, it is larger than 4 years or 10 years. In my mind it is about the faith of your voters, and the work you do now to uphold it and strengthen it.

Thank you for your time and attention, and for the chance to testify.

Sarah Warner,
Board of Directors
League of Women Voters of Ohio