

**PROPONENT/OPPONENT TESTIMONY OF:**

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**IN SUPPORT OF:**

Equal Districts for Northwest Ohio

Ohio Redistricting Commission

**[Toledo, OH, 8/26/21]** — Thank you to the members of the Ohio Redistricting Commission for the opportunity to submit testimony in favor of equal districts that fairly represent all Ohioans. My name is Ismael Gad, and I am from Sylvania, Ohio. I have been a Sylvania resident for the last twenty years. I attended the public school system here, starting at Central Trail Elementary, Timber Stone Junior High, and Southview Highschool. I received my Bachelor's in civil engineering from the University of Toledo and have been here ever since. Toledo is my home. I played for the soccer clubs here, including the Toledo Celtics and the Pacesetter Soccer Club in Sylvania. In high school, I took part in debate club, mock trial, and served as student senate president. I have had the privilege of being part of the many organizations and institutions in this wonderful community.

Unfortunately, the current district maps do not reflect my lived experience as a community member which weakens my voice as an Ohio voter. District lines are drawn in such a way that they diminish my ability to advocate for myself and what I consider to be my community. My residential community in Sylvania, which is very ethnically and religiously diverse, is lumped in with rural communities to the West of us, which I have no significant connection with. The reality is that a lot of the institutions, programs, relationships, and people I engage with daily are towards the East, closer to the University of Toledo. For district maps to genuinely represent Ohio communities, they should maintain the integrity of these communities in relation to their educational, social, and community institutions and connections.

Fair maps mean proportional political representation, which is the true meaning of democracy. The commission must fulfill its obligation to Ohio voters to draw fair maps by keeping communities together. Anything less is an affront to our democracy.

Thank you for your time.