

## Testimony to the Ohio Redistricting Commission

Date: September 13, 2021  
From: Mary Ogden  
To: Co-Chairs Cupp and Sykes and members of the Ohio Redistricting Commission  
Subject: Ohio Redistricting Commission "official working maps" and Medina County Ohio

Good afternoon, my name Mary Ogden and I am a resident of Medina Township in Medina County, presenting testimony as an interested party. I cannot be with you today in person or virtually due other commitments. Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts and concerns regarding the maps accepted by the Ohio Redistricting Commission as the "official working maps." It was disturbing, but not very surprising to hear that the map makers were instructed by GOP legislative leadership to disregard the Voting Rights Act and proportionality as required in the Ohio State Constitution in drawing the district lines for their proposed map. It was wonderful that independent mapping experts saw immediately that the map is not competitive and its only purpose is to ensure a Republican stronghold on the Ohio statehouse and not surprising to also ensure that Republicans pick up several more seats. The "official working map" on these grounds alone is unacceptable to the voters of Ohio who overwhelmingly supported the 2015 state redistricting reforms and we demand that you work with the minority members of the Ohio Redistricting Commission to develop fair, proportional, and competitive legislative maps. I would have assumed (always dangerous) that taking your oath of office actually meant something to you, but it would appear that your commitment to the Republican Party outweighs your commitment to the State of Ohio and its citizens.

As I look at the maps that have been presented I see once again that Medina County is being split in ways that do not reflect how people in the county live, work and operate. There is no logical reason to split Medina County period and definitely not in the manner that is provided. Why would the western half of the Medina County be paired in a district with Ashland County when it has little in common with Ashland County? Brunswick, the largest urban population in Medina is cut off from Medina City and paired with a rural part of the county including Homerville and Ashland County. Do you truly not understand the differences between life in a 'city' and life in a 'rural area'? How difficult are you trying to make this for the person who must represent 'Medina County' in the State Legislature? This approach certainly does not benefit Medina voters and does not reflect where they spend most of their time. In 2021, while mapping where Medina countians live, work, shop, spend leisure time, and get their healthcare, NOT ONE person mentioned Ashland County. This is yet another attempt to gerrymander Medina voters, breaking up the contiguous residential and commercial corridor between Medina City and Brunswick, placing us at a disadvantage when petitioning our legislative officials ensuring the continuing problem that voters do not know who their representative and senators are, and even worse, the offices of the representatives and senators are confused by the gerrymandered districts and don't know where their districts are.

It is important that you take the time to consider other options such as Geoff Wise' Ohio House and Senate maps. In these maps Medina County is whole and paired with Wayne and western Summit Counties. People in Medina County have strong ties to Western Summit County for shopping, leisure, healthcare, services, and work. Residents from Southern Medina County travel to Wayne County for

those very same reasons and for agricultural purposes. Land use in Western Summit County and Medina counties are similar and reflect the rural/suburban nature. People all over the county consistently mentioned easy access to Interstates 76 and 71 and the ability to easily get to Fairlawn, Akron, and Cleveland. In Medina County we have infrastructure, environmental, and healthcare concerns (such as there is no hospital that delivers babies in Medina County) that are best addressed when the county is kept whole and paired with like communities.

Ohio voters told you what we wanted with our votes in 2015. We do not want to be packed and jammed into gerrymandered districts that dilute our votes and make the primaries the competitive race and the general election a “done deal,” even though the gerrymander is hidden in “false compactness.” As an Ohio voter I expect and demand that the Ohio Redistricting Commission follow the letter and the spirit of the redistricting reform passed in 2015. Or because you have been in power for so long thanks to the gerrymandered districts that exist, that you no longer believe that you are bound by the law? Ohioans spoke with their votes in 2015 and were clear, we want proportional districts and competitive districts that represent the population of Ohio and do not unfairly benefit one political party over another due to gerrymandering. Draw fair districts and let the chips fall where they may. Medina County wants to remain whole and be placed with communities that reflect where we spend our time and share our values. It is very clear that maps offered by Geoff Wise for the House and Senate meet these standards – you should consider these maps as the “official working map” of the Ohio Redistricting Commission. It is time for the Ohio Redistricting Commission to stop foot dragging, apathy, and blatant noncompliance with the Ohio Constitution and federal law and undertake the bipartisan work that is needed to do the will of Ohio voters in creating fair, competitive districts for Ohio. Anything less is a disservice to democracy and your oath of office. I thank you for your time and will persist in every way possible to push for fair districts in Ohio.