Testimony opposing Ohio SJR 5 –

Good morning. My name is Mary Counter, I live in Columbus, Oh.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

Gerrymandering has eroded my belief that elections are fair and represent the will of the people. As a person of faith, it is my expectation that we seek fairness and justice, not power and corruption.

All politics is indeed local even though the news often focuses on national government and politicians. It is obvious that the people of Ohio want their vote to count both at the state and national level. The overwhelming voter support for Issue 1 in 2015 tells me this is what the majority of voters in Ohio want too. Winning an opportunity to serve constituents should be ”fair and square.” Having a map that allows all votes to count should also help to stabilize some of the hard left or hard right partisan views we see today. A candidate in a fair district is likely to have to compromise on both sides to win. It would be my expectation that a community would be represented more fairly in congress because of this.

Anytime the political party in power is trying to rush through a ballot initiative such as is being done with SJR 5, with little or no opportunity for public comment, I begin to surmise that there is something about it that does not hold up to the sunlight of an opportunity for public comment. As with other important things that happen in the statehouse, there seems to be a rush at the end with little time for public comment or hearings to hear all views.

I am not a lawyer, politician, or statistician. This is the first time I have ever testified in front of any legislative committee which is probably pretty obvious. I am just a citizen who wants fair redistricting that is bipartisan. I feel better with a commission and computers doing the selection rather than the legislature.  SJR 5 issues as currently proposed include the need for only token support from the minority party and can institutionalize gerrymandering in our state constitution with the way large counties are proposed to be handled. I want communities kept together. I want to feel my vote counts. I want minorities to feel their vote is not being diluted. We, as citizens of Ohio, want to take advantage of this opportunity to have fairer districts.

Thanks again for the opportunity to share my views with you today.