Good Afternoon. My name is Kobie Christian, Communications Director for For Our Future Ohio, a member of the Equal districts coalition. We do a lot of work around the state & we've been doing a lot of work around the redistricting process, and you know, we're not here asking for much, just that we stop being cheated.

We're asking for congressional maps that reflect Ohio's partisan Balance, allow for pathways to representation for communities of color, and keep our communities together. We just want fair maps. What do we mean by fine?

Well, the first thing is that it would reflect Ohio's partisan balance. I don't think that a party with fewer votes should have more seats, but the same sense of fairness that allows me to say that leads me to say that a party shouldn't hold more seats than what voting results would reflect.

That means that in Ohio, a fair map would give Democrats 7 seats and give republicans 8 seats. More than just one of these 15 seats should be competitive. Ohio is a purple swing state and our maps should reflect that. The people of Ohio have suffered for 10 years under the maps resulting from the partisan gerrymandering republicans carried out in 2021.

How do we know these maps were gerrymandered by Republicans? Because they somehow hold 75% of the current congressional seats while only winning 54% of the votes. Let me say that again. Republicans gave themselves 75% of the seats while only winning with only 54% of the votes. Now that's not representative of the will of Ohio's voters. I wonder, Who's will is it representative of?

We all know Ohio is a purple state with voters who have supported both Democratic & Republican candidates statewide. Districts should reflect how Ohioans vote, and that would make some real competitive seats.

Ohio is more purple than unfair maps allow it to be. and it's not just unfair to the other side. If Republicans can just give themselves an extra 20% more seats than they actually earned. That allows them to escape accountability from all voters.

It's important that fair maps provide communities of color with real pathways to political representation. We can do this by reversing the current gerrymandering that dilutes the voting power of communities of color across the state.

There are some specific characteristics that fair maps would have

I live in Columbus. Columbus is too big to fit into one congressional seat. It has to be split. But Franklin County should only be divided into two districts: 1 seat anchored in Columbus that contains as much of its urban core and surrounding areas as possible, protecting especially the Black and Latinx populations from being needlessly gerrymandered. The second central Ohio district needs the entirety of the growing AAPI and new American communities in north and northwestern Franklin County.

I used to live in Cincinnati. The Cincinnati-anchored district should include Black communities in the eastern half of the county (like Forest Park, Woodlawn, and Lincoln Heights) to ensure they are paired together with similar communities in and around Cincinnati.

The Cleveland-anchored district should be entirely within Cuyahoga County to protect against unnecessary packing of the area's Black voters and need to keep Latinx and AAPI communities in and around Cleveland together.

The Akron-anchored district needs to include the entirety of Summit County to protect its Black communities from being unnecessarily split apart like they are under current maps.

The Toledo-anchored district needs to keep Lucas County together in its entirety to protect both the Black and Latinx communities in and around the city.

The Dayton-anchored district needs to keep Montgomery County and nearly all of Greene County whole while reaching into Springfield to pair Black communities in each to bolster their potential for political representation.

Fair maps would keep our communities together; they do not divide and separate us to weaken our voices and our votes like our current congressional maps, which crack and pack our big cities. This absolutely needs to be reversed for future maps. It's essential for adequate political representation.

By making sure communities are kept together in our major metro areas, map drawers will be able to achieve the statewide ideal of partisan fairness. A world in which the number of seats a party holds reflects the number of votes they won.

By un-cracking and unpacking these areas, future maps can un-gerrymander the current maps and provide representation the people of Ohio actually vote for.

Thank you