

**TESTIMONY OF BENITA KAHN
100 N. Stanwood Rd., Bexley, Ohio
November 9, 2021**

**IN OPPOSITION TO PROPOSED SENATE
CONGRESSIONAL MAP INTRODUCED IN SB 258:**

My name is Benita Kahn and I live in Bexley, Ohio, which is currently in Congressional District 3. I am testifying today because of the impact the proposed Congressional map introduced in SB 258 will have on my community. Because of the gerrymandering practices used by the Ohio legislature when drawing the Congressional maps in 2010, in 2018 Ohio voters passed by 75% an amendment to the Ohio Constitution to impose requirements that would limit this gerrymandering. However, the proposed map in SB 258 demonstrates that the Senate has not complied with Article XIX of the Ohio Constitution.

The voters in Ohio voted for the creation of districts that are compact, contiguous, and have limited splitting of counties, municipalities and townships. Article XIX further specifies that if a municipality is to be split it may be included with other municipalities or townships in the same county if the residents have similar interests. As this process has now moved back to the general assembly, it requires approval of any plan by three-fifths of the members of each house, including one-third of the members of each of the two largest political parties represented in each house. Without this, a simple majority can pass a plan for four years, *but* such plan may not unduly favor or disfavor a political party or its incumbent.

Against the clear will of the voters and Article XIX of the Ohio Constitution, the Senate has introduced a bill with a Congressional District plan that fails to comply with these requirements.

On a statewide basis, the gerrymandered districts are skewed heavily in one political direction, with 13 of the proposed districts favoring Republican candidates and 2 favoring Democratic candidates. This will result in many Ohioans, including myself, having our voting power limited and our voices lost at the U.S. House of Representatives.

This 13/2 Congressional District split is an 87% Republican/13% Democrat representation for Ohio. Ohio has been considered a swing state for many years as shown in statewide presidential elections going back to 1960. What is clear from these statewide federal elections is there has never been a result in over 60 years that is even close to an 87/13% split. Based on the last decade, a fair map would include 8 Republican and 7 Democratic congressional seats.

The impact on my voting rights of the proposed Congressional District for Bexley is also clear. Bexley is 4 miles from downtown Columbus and very much a part of the Columbus community. Other communities closely surrounding or a part of Columbus having common interests and concerns with Bexley, such as Clintonville, Upper Arlington, and Grandview, are 6-10 miles from Bexley. Yet, as proposed in the SB 258 plan, Bexley and these communities would be in three different Congressional Districts.

Rather than being included with these similar communities, Bexley is cracked out into a district with 13 other communities - all of these are rural. There is little doubt that the interests and concerns of these communities are different from Bexley. Bexley has consistently voted for democratic candidates, but with the SB 258 map it would be forced into an overwhelmingly Republican voting district.

Bexley should have the same congressional representative as similar communities in Franklin County. We need a congressional representative who lives in our community and understands our issues and provides the constituents with an opportunity for meaningful input in Congress. Franklin County in which Bexley is located, had a 2020 census population of 1,323,807. Based on a population of 786,630 in each of the proposed SB 258 Congressional Districts, there is no reason to split Franklin County into three districts, other than to dilute the votes of residents of Franklin County.

In closing, I want to emphasize that since I first reached the age to be able to vote, I have voted for over 50 years and consider my vote a core right and privilege under both the U.S. and Ohio constitutions. Yet, the Congressional District map proposed in SB 258 will effectively nullify my vote and my voice in Congress by cracking me out of my community of interest and placing me in a community of voters who have very dissimilar interests. We cannot have fair representation if voters' voices are silenced.