



*The OEA will lead the way for continuous improvement of public education while advocating for members and the learners they serve.*

**Senate Bill 258- Opposition Testimony  
Senate Local Government and Elections Committee  
Tuesday, November 9, 2021**

Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Maharath and Members of the Committee:

My name is Robert Davis with Government Relations for the Ohio Education Association. On behalf of OEA and our 120,000 members, thank you for the opportunity to testify. OEA is opposed to SB 258 as it fails to comply with Congressional redistricting reforms passed by the voters in 2018.

OEA was an early supporter of the ballot measure. Among the legislative policies and resolutions adopted by our members is a continuing theme of democracy. OEA believes that voters should have access to the polls, and that citizen participation should be encouraged. It's what OEA members teach their students and it's central to our character as a nation.

Partisan gerrymandering subverts our democracy. It's designed to devalue the voice of the voters—to rig the game. Drawing districts to favor one party over another is wrong. It leads to less competition and a less responsive government. It leads to more polarization and less cooperation among our elected officials.

OEA is committed to fair maps because we know a more inclusive democracy means better decisions for students, educators and communities. Our educators serve students from all backgrounds. Lawmakers who are responsive to the voters are essential in meeting student needs.

The Congressional map proposed in SB 258 is a clear example of gerrymandering for partisan advantage. The map would produce 13 out of 15 districts that favor Republican candidates. Ohio's three largest counties (Franklin, Cuyahoga, and Hamilton) all of which tend to support Democrats have each been split into three separate Congressional districts. Splitting counties is allowable and in some cases necessary. However, the way in which they are split—combining smaller portions of urban counties with reliably Republican outlying counties—tell you everything you need to know about the mapmakers' intent.

There are several notable instances of districts that are not compact, where a slim portion of territory is used to link parts of a large urban county with distant areas of the state:

- In CD 4 portions of Franklin County winds into a district that stretches as far as Allen County
- In CD 9 the district takes portions of Lucas County skirts along the Lake and extends down into Morrow County



- In CD 15 a sliver of Licking County is used to link portions of Franklin County with a district that extends all the way to the Ohio River.

This is textbook gerrymandering. It's as if nothing has changed. The legislature must recognize that the voters of Ohio have given you an assignment. Ohioans came together to support redistricting reform. We changed the Constitution. We have every right to expect and demand much better than business as usual and the status quo.

The map as proposed in SB 258 is not compact and is drawn to unduly favor one party over another. A fair map would more closely conform to the overall voting preferences of the state. OEA urges the members of the legislature to come together and work for a bipartisan agreement and a ten-year map. Anything less is a failure of leadership.

Thank you for your time and attention.