

PROPONENT TESTIMONY OF:

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(Ohioan Abroad)

IN SUPPORT OF:

HB 55
Allow House committees/sessions be conducted virtually
House Government Oversight Committee

Dear Members of the Committee,

In a functioning democracy, people should be able to get involved in the legislative process. One crucial way for us to get involved is by giving testimonies in front of the state legislature on proposed legislation and redistricting. With the ongoing pandemic, giving testimony in person at the state capitol would be extremely difficult and unsafe for us. So what is the solution to this problem? Virtual testimony.

However, Ohio is one of several states that does not allow its people to give testimonies virtually. This prevents most Ohioans from getting involved in the legislative process and participating in our democracy. Providing virtual testimony for all legislative hearings in the General Assembly would provide all Ohioans, from all over the state, to contribute safely.

Giving testimonies is especially crucial this year because this is a redistricting year. Ohio holds some of the most gerrymandered districts in the country, including Ohio's 4th ("The Duck") and 9th ("The Snake on the Lake") congressional districts. For too long, Ohioans have been shut out of the redistricting process. Allowing virtual testimonies would allow Ohioans to tell the General Assembly how gerrymandering has affected their communities and advocate for fair district maps.

Making democracy open, safe and accessible is a nonpartisan issue. Representative Brigid Kelly's House Bill 55 is a crucial first step to allowing all Ohioans from all over the state to participate in the legislative process.

Thank you for taking the time to look at this testimony. I hope that it has given you appropriate insight into how to make democracy accessible to us.

Yours faithfully,
Asante Ndlela