

DATE: November 3, 2021
TO: Members of the Ohio House Government Oversight Committee
FROM: Desiree Tims, President and CEO, Innovation Ohio
RE: Congressional Redistricting Testimony

Chairman Wilkin, Vice Chair Cutrona, Ranking Member Brown, and members of the House Government Oversight Committee. Thank you for allowing me to testify today.

My name is Desiree Tims. I am a native Daytonian and currently serve as President and CEO of Innovation Ohio.

Innovation Ohio is proud to be a member of the Equal Districts coalition. The Equal Districts coalition is a unified group of over 30 advocacy organizations, labor unions, and community leaders fighting for fair maps. It is our goal to see an end to a gerrymandered Ohio.

Over the past ten years, Ohio has voted about 55% for Republicans, 45% for Democrats. Seats in government should reflect this breakdown. A fair map that is representative of the people would be comprised of seven Democratic seats and eight Republican seats. Ohio's current congressional map has been gerrymandered to give unearned power to one party.

Gerrymandering is defined by the Brennan Center for Justice as the practice of drawing districts to favor one political party or racial group. It skews election results, makes races less competitive, hurts communities of color, and thwarts the will of the voters. Gerrymandering leads many Americans to feel their voices don't matter. My question for legislators is: why do you feel that certain Ohioans' voices matter more than others?

It is inadequate to draw a few "token" districts where Black and brown voters are packed together to stifle their power. It is also inadequate to intentionally divide Black and brown communities in order to secure an outcome that is the opposite of representation for this group. The solution is simple: Draw fair districts that give Black and brown Ohioans a real shot at representation all over the state.

Draw fair districts that respect voters' wishes by keeping communities with similar needs and interests together.

Ohio's major cities should be the anchors of their own congressional districts. Cleveland should be the anchor for a district that rests fully within Cuyahoga County.

Cincinnati should be the anchor for a district that rests fully within Hamilton County.

Toledo, Akron, and Dayton — Ohio's fourth, fifth, and sixth largest cities — should each anchor their own congressional districts as well.

There is no excuse for breaking up major population centers, but for cheating. For ten years, Ohio's congressional districts — the second worst gerrymandered congressional map in the country — have suffocated the voices of millions of Ohioans. Our current map is a stain on

history and an insult to democracy.

The founders and framers of the Constitution would shame you for continued efforts to reverse democracy. As do I.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.