

**TESTIMONY OF BENITA KAHN  
100 N. Stanwood Rd., Bexley, Ohio  
November 10, 2021**

**IN OPPOSITION TO PROPOSED HOUSE  
CONGRESSIONAL MAP INTRODUCED IN HB 479:**

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 H.B. 479 will have on my community. As a result of the gerrymandering practices used by the Ohio legislature when drawing the Congressional District 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 HB 479 demonstrates that the House 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 House 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 proposed 13/2 Congressional District split is an 87% Republican/13% Democrat representation for Ohio. There has never been a result in presidential elections over the last 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. Bexley is located in Franklin County, which is the community of interest for Bexley. Franklin County is made up primarily of urban and suburban communities, all having similar interests with Columbus. Those suburban communities having common interests and concerns with Bexley, include New Albany, Westerville, Dublin and Hilliard, each of which are 13-22 miles from Bexley. Yet, as proposed in the H.B. 479 plan, Bexley and these communities would be in three different Congressional Districts.

Rather than being included with these similar communities, Dublin and Hilliard, which are on the west side of Franklin County, are cracked out into proposed District 15 with 2 very rural counties located east of Franklin County. Dublin and Hilliard are over 40 miles from the largest cities in these two counties. Similarly, Westerville and New Albany are cracked out of Franklin County and placed in proposed District 4 along with 10 rural counties located north and west of Franklin County. District 4 would

include Lima, Ohio which is over 70 miles from Dublin and Hilliard. As for the affect on Bexley, Franklin County is our community of interest and this county and Bexley have consistently voted for democratic candidates over the last decade. Yet the proposed splitting of Franklin County would result in Franklin County having significantly less of a voice representing its interests in Congress.

Bexley should have the same congressional representative as similar communities in Franklin County. We need congressional representatives who live in our community and understand our issues and provides the constituents with an opportunity for meaningful input in Congress.

Franklin County had a 2020 census population of 1,323,807. Based on a population ranging from 670,194 to 977,099 in the Congressional Districts proposed in H.B. 479, Franklin County could be divided into only 2 districts. Article XIX provides that Franklin County may be split “no more than twice”, but does not require it to be split twice. 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 H.B. 479 will significantly diminish my vote and my voice in Congress by unnecessarily splitting my community of interest, Franklin County, into three Congressional Districts. Much of Franklin County will be joined with a community of voters who have very dissimilar interests. We cannot have fair representation if voters' voices are silenced.