

SB 237 Testimony  
Michael W. Ahern  
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Good morning Chair Gavarone, Ranking member Maharath and members of the senate Local Government and Elections Committee.

My name is Michael Ahern. I live in Blacklick and ranking member Maharath is my state Senator. I am registered as an unaffiliated voter and I have voted for members of each of your Parties over the years. I am here this morning as a proponent of the map embodied in SB237. Of the two maps introduced by Senate legislators, I find that the SB237 map most closely aligns with and meets the substantive requirements of the 2018 Redistricting reforms. Others have done a great job of discussing partisan lean, compactness and the issue of not favoring or disfavoring one Party. I think this map meets those criteria. But I am here this morning to focus on my community and how this map meets my expectation of community representation under the redistricting reforms. I cite the following in support of this statement.

I live in District 1 in the proposed map. The district is wholly contained in Franklin County. The remainder of Franklin County is contained in District 2. The combination of these two Districts minimize the split of the Central Ohio/Columbus area into just two Districts. This is a VAST improvement over the Senate SB258 map which carves this area into unrecognizable bits and pairs it with communities as far flung as those along the Ohio river and Senate President Huffman's stronghold in Lima. But I digress.

As you are aware, Columbus is booming. The Columbus way, combined with excellent educational opportunities and a highly mixed business community require focused representation in congress. The SB237 map does just this. Additionally, sound planning is needed to meet the challenges that this growth will spur. Fundamental to meeting those challenges are basic infrastructure - roads, bridges, water and wastewater. Members of Congress are tasked with many duties including advocating for

their districts when it comes to spending federal money. In fact, federal funds make up approximately 37% of the state budget and are the largest single source of funds. One of the most tangible applications of those funds is through transportation planning and infrastructure projects where they constitute almost half of the Ohio Department of Transportation budget. Our transportation infrastructure is literally the economic lifeline to the wider national and international economy. ODOT supports this vital infrastructure through transportation projects. These projects are based on transportation infrastructure plans implemented by ODOT in conjunction with long range transportation planning developed by metropolitan planning organizations like the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Organization. This map provides two strong, focused advocates in Congress that align with the majority of the MORPC area of jurisdiction - particularly the high growth areas of Franklin and Delaware counties.

And finally, district 1 in this map keeps important Franklin County communities wholly represented - some of which have been severed in two by federal projects in the past. The near east side, the Far east side, Linden - these historically underserved communities will have a local voice representing them in Congress. Similarly, Port Columbus and Rickenbacker Airport are sited in District 1. Strong community-based representation of these vital logistics resources is extremely important as the region continues to expand the inland port services under the jurisdiction of the Columbus Regional Airport Authority that have served Central Ohio businesses and all of Ohio so well.

There are many other good aspects of this map, but I have chosen to focus on my proposed district 1 today in order to highlight how drawing a community-oriented district benefits our wider economy. I urge you to adopt the SB237 map or use it as a starting point in drawing your final map for approval.