

Andrew Green

Testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 258

November 16, 2021

Chair Gavarone, vice chair O'Brien, ranking member Maharath, and members of the Senate Local Government and Elections Committee, thank you for affording me the opportunity to submit written testimony regarding Senate Bill 258. Unfortunately, due to the haste nature with which this hearing was scheduled, I am unable to testify in person. Despite chair Gavarone's claims that this process is being structured in a way that provides for input from as many people as possible, I have yet to see how this process has actually afforded that opportunity to as many people as possible, and this hastily scheduled meeting is just one example of one obstacle to allowing input from as many people as possible.

I am writing to testify in extreme opposition to Senate Bill 258. Over the last several weeks, both this committee and a joint legislative committee have solicited public input on Senate Bill 258 and an alternative plan, Senate Bill 237. In the five hearings between these two committees, the two committees have heard from numerous people, only one of whom expressed any support for Senate Bill 258. On the other hand, countless people testified in support of Senate Bill 237. While I fully acknowledge that neither bill is perfect, it is clear from the testimony received by this committee and the joint committee that there is almost no support for Senate Bill 258 and considerable support for Senate Bill 237. Additionally, not only is there almost no testimony in support for Senate Bill 258, there is overwhelming testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 258. The opposition testimony regarding Senate Bill 237 is much smaller in both number and frequency, yet here we are: seriously considering Senate Bill 258 (and not Senate Bill 237) for a vote before this committee. How is this possible? How can Senate Bill 258 be justified as a good plan for Ohio's congressional districts when countless Ohioans have testified that this plan is both bad for their communities and unconstitutional and just one Ohioan expressed even a modest approval of the plan? If Senate Bill 258 is the Bill that will become the law establishing Ohio's congressional districts, why has there been no amendments introduced to fix some of the concerns that countless Ohioans have addressed in their opposition testimony? These questions would have obvious answers or would not even be valid questions if the congressional redistricting process was truly transparent, something that was promised in the language of Issue 1 on the May 2018 ballot. That is not the case, however. This committee, the Ohio Redistricting Commission, and the General Assembly as a whole have completely neglected both the letter and intent of the 2018 constitutional amendment overwhelmingly supported by Ohio voters. This cannot be allowed to continue.

As I conclude writing this testimony, it has come to my attention that an amendment to Senate Bill 258 has been released by Senator McColley. This update came about 14 hours before the hearing for which I am submitting testimony and at which there will be a likely vote on this map. In Senator McColley's own words, this new map features "significant changes." Almost immediately voting on a map with significant changes does not allow for meaningful public input. Let me say that again: **THIS DOES NOT ALLOW FOR MEANINGFUL PUBLIC INPUT!** Furthermore, Senator McColley has yet to release shapefiles for this new proposal. He hasn't even released the PDF "shapefile" that he did for the original proposal. There is no way for Ohioans or the minority caucus to analyze this new proposal through the night without this information. This shuts out the minority caucus from this discussion, something all but

forbidden under the redistricting reforms passed in 2018. From what I can tell from the low quality image of Senator McColley's new proposal, I have a number of comments:

- The number of county splits has been misstated. There are not 12 county splits. There are 13 by my count, but I contend there must be a small portion of another county somewhere that is split that I cannot identify on the poor quality map that was released. While it may be true that only twelve counties are split, this does not mean that there are only twelve county splits. It is clear that Cuyahoga county and Hamilton county are each split twice, meaning there are two county splits in each of those two counties. That means there are 14 county splits, the minimum number that are likely needed to ensure exactly equal population in each district. This is the same number of splits as Senate Bill 237 and House Bill 483. Senate Bill 237 and House Bill 483, however, do not split any counties more than once. I (and certainly many others) would argue that splitting 14 counties once is the best way to achieve equal population in each district. Splitting any county more than once carves up that particular community more than is necessary and is a great disservice to the people that live there. Following the rules of Article XIX, it would be possibly only to split nine counties: five counties split twice and four counties split once. If it is the goal to minimize the number of counties that are split, why wasn't this done? I contend it wasn't done because it is clearly not the goal of Article XIX. Instead, I argue that the goal was to keep every county as whole as possible, which means only splitting a county twice if absolutely necessary. Based on the data from the 2020 Census, it is not necessary to split any of Ohio's counties twice.
- It is impossible for me to tell which or how many townships and or municipal corporations are split on this map, but it looks like multiple townships are split. Article XIX, Section 2(F)(3)(b) states that townships should be kept whole over municipal corporations, something that is only accomplished in Senate Bill 237.
- In this proposal, it looks, though I can't be sure without a shapefile (which, again, has not been provided), like my home city of Cuyahoga Falls is completely detached from the neighboring city of Akron, which is less than one mile away from my home and where my office is located. I do my grocery shopping in the city of Akron, I have connections to the University of Akron, and very much consider myself to be a part of the Akron community. However, instead of being in the same congressional district as the city of Akron, the proposal places me in a district with Ashland, Wooster, and Holmes county. While these largely rural communities may not be as far away from my home as some of the places I was paired with under the original proposal, they still have very different concerns and do not share much in common with my suburban home of Cuyahoga Falls. The vast majority of people in these areas do not come to Cuyahoga Falls with any regularity, nor do I go to those areas with any regularity. I do, however, frequently go to and rely heavily on the city of Akron. Cuyahoga Falls and Akron should be paired together in one congressional district. Much can be said for other suburbs of Akron that are split away from the city itself and for the suburbs of Cincinnati that are almost entirely separated from the city itself. This new proposal, while it does change many things over the old proposal, it still splits apart communities of interest around many of Ohio's major cities, most notably Akron and Cincinnati.
- The entirety of the Mahoning Valley, where I grew up, is paired with Appalachian counties along the Ohio River. I think this is a poor plan. The Mahoning Valley has much more in common with and would be better paired with Portage, Stark, and Ashtabula counties than with Appalachia.

I urge this committee to vote no on this new proposal. There has not been enough time to discuss this new proposal publically, and it is still not even fully available to the public or, as far as I know, to the minority caucus. This is a slap in the face to Ohioans who fought for, voted on, and approved a *transparent* redistricting process.