

To Co-Chairs Antonio and Stewart and fellow commission members, thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding the congressional district proposal introduced as H.B. 442.

The ongoing federal government shutdown makes clear how critical responsive, accountable congressional representation is for affordable healthcare, for food for children, and for stability needed for safety and economic growth.

We have been tasked by our constituents with trying to find bipartisan agreement and adopt the people's map. And Ohioans desperately need us to get this right, because every day we are reminded of the consequences of having unrepresentative districts.

The General Assembly failed to do that in September and this commission has 10 days to try and meet our constitutional charge.

The map in H.B. 442 represents a fair, constitutional proposal. This map fully complies with the amendment Ohioans overwhelmingly voted for in 2018 to establish the process for creating districts. Within the joint redistricting committee, this proposal received significant support from the public and questions from our colleagues.

We did not receive any alternative map or substantive suggestion for alterations to this proposal. We continue to welcome feedback, as we have maintained from the beginning that this proposal is not the only way to reach a fair map and we are not insisting on any particular district make up or partisan balance.

The map Leader Antonio and I have proposed is fair and constitutional. It keeps communities together. It minimizes splitting of counties and cities. It increases compactness compared to the current map. And, it recognizes federal and state requirements for equal population and protection of minority voting rights.

In this map, 74 counties are whole, 14 counties are split once, no county is split twice. Three districts are entirely within a single county. This is an improvement upon the current congressional map.

This proposal was developed with the data from the last ten years of elections, which show that the state is about 55% republican and 45% democratic. This map has districts where 8 favor a Republican and 7 favor a Democrat. Five districts are within plus or minus five points, which is an increase in competitive districts over the current congressional map. Of those, one Republican leaning and four Democratic leaning districts are within the plus or minus five point range. And, one additional Republican leaning and one additional Democratic leaning district are within plus or minus six points.

A gerrymandered map is one that is drawn to give unfair or special advantage to a political party or group while minimizing competitive elections. In a state where just over half of voters tend to vote Republican, having 11 out of 15 districts drawn to heavily favor one party is a gerrymandered map.

A gerrymandered map stripes Ohio voters of their ability to hold elected officials accountable when there are so few districts that are truly politically competitive.

We are seeing what happens when politicians are able to pick their voters, instead of the other way around. The result is: hospitals closing in our rural communities, healthcare premiums driven up by hundreds of dollars, and children hungry in school lunchrooms. Those are the costs of a government that doesn't represent its people.

H.B. 442 is not the only way to create fair districts worthy of Ohioans, and we would welcome the opportunity to engage with maps drawn by others that meet the constitutional requirements. We hope this commission is able to work together and set aside partisan differences to develop a map that meets our constitutional requirements, represents Ohioans as best as possible, and that everyone can support. These have to be Ohio maps for Ohio's citizens, and no one else.

I look forward to the opportunity to work with commission members and seeing bipartisan or republican proposals for districts. We stand ready to move forward with HB 442 including amendments or any proposal that gives Ohioans what they have repeatedly asked for and what they deserve. Thank you and I am happy to answer questions.