

## **Testimony to Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission**

**Quentin Turner, Common Cause Michigan**

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Good evening commissioners, staff members, volunteers, and everyone tuning into this process tonight. My name is Quentin Turner and I am a lifelong Michigander representing the nonpartisan organization Common Cause Michigan. Common Cause endeavors to create an open, honest, and accountable government that serves the interests of the people. We have been working in coalition with other non-partisan organizations including Voter's Not Politicians, Michigan Voices, the League of Women Voters, Michigan League of Conservation Voters Education Fund, ACLU Michigan, Engage Michigan, and the Michigan Non-Profit Association to closely follow Michigan's first independent redistricting process in order to inform and educate the members of our organizations across the state.

While we are excited for what an independent redistricting process will mean for Michigan's democracy, we are concerned about proposals to begin the map drawing process using existing district lines. Instead, we urge the Commission to start fresh after taking testimony from communities across the state. Starting fresh is the only way to honor the intent of the voters, center communities who have traditionally been sidelined in the redistricting process, and ensure fair districts for the next decade.

Using Michigan's current gerrymandered districts as a starting point undermines the intent of the voters who voted overwhelmingly in favor of the constitutional amendment creating our new redistricting process. As you know, the existing district lines were drawn behind closed doors by politicians looking to entrench partisan advantage. The result of that can be seen not far from here in Kalamazoo. Michigan's 60<sup>th</sup> House District is currently 6% over the median population of all other districts. In 2010, legislators packed Kalamazoo's majority Black neighborhoods into the 60th House district, effectively diluting their votes, resulting in less representation for those communities as compared to surrounding areas. If we use the existing 2010 maps as a starting point, we are baking in this underrepresentation.

Michiganders deserve better.

It is essential that the Commission does not bake in the current inequities and existing violations of the Commission's guiding principles into new maps. This is a chance to make something new that can work better for Michigan than anything we have had before. We should not let the partisan craftsmanship of our old maps interfere with the opportunity for an approach that instead centers the needs of voters. We hope that the commission makes the choice to start the mapping process with drafting brand new maps instead of tweaking around the edges of our current partisan maps.

I would like to thank the Commissioners and commission staff for the opportunity to speak tonight and for their dedication to public input, transparency and accountability. Thank you!