

Testimony of **Libby Blackburn**, Vice President, North Allegheny School Board

I have traveled to 46 states and over 30 countries, one thing I realize is that the Constitutional Republic of the United States makes us the greatest country in the world. We hear leaders of our country use terms like “Make America Great Again” and “Build Back Better.” What that tells us, is that at the highest level, both Republicans and Democrats realize America is not as great as it was, and certainly not where it should be. They are saying we need to build our country BACK to greatness. So let’s look at what made our country great. Our forefathers fought for independence because they were taxed without representation. Therefore, when the greatest minds of the world wrote the Constitution for our country, they declared communities were to be represented by elected officials, who would make decisions based on what they felt was best for the needs of their community. So, how can these redrawn districts be fair when you are dividing those aforementioned communities?

Children are our future. If we want to make sure our country remains great, we must make sure they are educated. School districts are the key in every community, and I would say it is the school district that actually forms and defines the various communities. School districts must remain together wherever possible in any redistricting plan; as they form critical boundaries and in some cases, substantial policy differences to be voted upon by their government representative. As a school board member for the past ten years in my community, I am quite familiar with the process of redistricting. We have done this several times within our school district, and I personally voted against one of our previous plans because of several reasons, including the division of neighborhoods. The Pennsylvania redistricting is similarly not ready for approval in that it divides a community. For this and other reasons, I am against the current proposed map.

I want to emphasize this should not be about Republicans and Democrats. The drawing of maps should be about fair districts. Dividing communities is not fair.

I live in North Allegheny School District. Currently we are represented in the PA House by one representative. Under the new plan, not only did you divide our District, you actually even divided a township and elementary school within the District! The very township I live in – McCandless Township - will have two different representatives. As a matter of fact, the poll where I vote and the children attending Ingomar Elementary School will have two different representatives. How is it possible that families attending a small elementary school would be represented by both the 28th and 30th House of Representatives? This is obviously not a fair redistricting plan. Can you imagine how confused voters will be in this area? Isn’t one of the goals of redistricting to make sure lines are drawn where communities are not divided? Knowing how completely unfair the current plan is in my community makes me question the legitimacy of this plan across the entire state. North Allegheny is small enough that the entire

school district is less than the population goal of 63,000, so why is this community not in the same district? Why did you divide it? There is never a legitimate reason to divide a community. Apparently someone wants to divide and confuse our voters. Having two representatives in one school district is ludicrous, let alone having two different people representing the community attending a small elementary school. Purposely confusing voters is tantamount to fraud. There can be no legitimate reason for this redistricting map.

Sincerely, Libby Blackburn