

Distinguished Members of the Legislature:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Dan Daub, and I am the Mayor of Tower City, Pennsylvania, a small borough in western Schuylkill County. I have been the Mayor for over 11 years, and I am a lifelong resident of the Tower City area. I am here today because I feel very passionate about the proposed changes to our current legislative District, the 125th, which is currently composed of Schuylkill and Dauphin Counties.

Under the proposed new maps, the entirety of western Schuylkill County will be moved into the 107th District, which is shifting from Northumberland County. I have lived my entire life in the Tower City and Porter Township areas, and I'm very concerned, frustrated and alarmed at the proposed new district. I am alarmed because from a day to day living perspective, western Schuylkill County and northern Dauphin County are one community! Each day residents of these areas interact with one another, shop at the same places, attend the same churches and face the same changes, ideals, values and culture. For decades, our little league baseball players help make up the Upper Dauphin County all-star team, playing with the dream of appearing in the Little League World Series in Williamsport some day. The county lines that divide Schuylkill and Dauphin counties has no impact on our day to day living, except in the perception held by many citizens that the government leaders in our respective county seats of Pottsville and Harrisburg often overlook our rural, self-sufficient, strong border communities and don't consider us when allocating county resources.

Several years ago, when the 717 area code was running out of numbers, Schuylkill County was going to be moved to the new 570 area code. Porter Township and Tower City Borough remained in the 717 area code, and still do to this day, because studies shown that most of our transactions and interactions went into Dauphin County, which remained in the 717 area code. This shows the longstanding relationship between our areas.

Tower City is one of the municipalities that encompasses the Williams Valley School District, which also includes Porter Township in Schuylkill, and Williams township, Williamstown, Wiconisco Township and Rush township in Dauphin County. We have grown up together, gone to school together, attend events together, and rally together when we are in need. This is one of those times we are in need, and we need the help of this committee and the Redistricting Commission to fix a terrible mistake by excluding our communities from the 125th District.

If you think people vote and care about the county line when deciding who their representative should be, you should consider that if that were the case, we would never have our current excellent State Rep. Joe Kerwin. Rep. Kerwin resides in Lykens, just down the road from Tower City, but in Dauphin County. In a primary election to be our new state Representative in 2020, Rep. Kerwin defeated longtime elected county row office holders, and overwhelming won the 125th District seat. He did not win because he lived in Dauphin County, he won because he was the best candidate, and because he lives in our region

– he is one of us, despite a county line that in essence cuts him off from Schuylkill County. His family ties go back generations to his grandfather and father, and even further in a family that has provided law services to our respective communities and counties for more than half a century. His family has completed deeds, wills, and other important legal services for individuals, businesses and charities. It is why our area was so motivated and excited to see a young man, from a family with deep roots of community service, willing to represent our area. This decision by the Redistricting Commission is a slap in our face! Totally unfair, and will be a huge turnoff to our citizens who have finally been energized and engaged, at least in part, thanks to this young man's heart of service.

I know that districts are not created for specific legislators, but truly the areas of western Schuylkill County and northern Dauphin County are extremely similar and, in practice, one community. Our people work very hard, with limited opportunities and very little government services. But when we need those services, we want to be able to talk to someone from our area that we know will help and understand our needs. We currently have that, and we want to keep it. We need our advocate to fight for our area. The Williams Valley school district is a poor district. Our people are a lot of elderly retirees, who live on a fixed social security income. We need our school district to be represented by the same legislator, one who knows our school, and the poor performing test scores that have plagued us. We need a legislator that grew up in our area, and decided to stay, because one of our biggest challenges is a brain drain, where our best and brightest young people move away because there isn't enough opportunity locally. Keeping this district united in western Schuylkill County, and northern Dauphin county is essential to our progress and to our future.

I cannot stress enough the huge injustice that the new map does to our area. It will be a major setback, and it is simply unacceptable. Tower City Borough and Porter Township have already unanimously enacted proclamations opposing the new districts at their January meetings. Hegin Township in the Tri-Valley School District is prepared to take the same action. Our communities have nothing in common with the fine people of Shamokin, Northumberland County, and we should not be in the same legislative district. Anyone who lives or works in the area knows that simply doesn't make common sense. Yet, that is what the new maps do. As an elected leader of my community, and a longtime servant and leader in civic organizations in Schuylkill County, I truly ask this committee and the Redistricting Committee to revise this travesty and keep western Schuylkill County and northern Dauphin county united.

Thank you for your time and consideration on this very important matter!!