

Testimony of Jean Handley
Dauphin County Resident
Before the Legislative Reapportionment Commission
Hearing on Legislative Redistricting
September 21, 2021

Good evening Chairman Nordenberg, Leaders Ward, McClinton, Benninghoff and Costa. I appreciate this opportunity to speak with you about the current state legislative redistricting.

My name is Jean Handley. I have lived in Susquehanna Township, Dauphin County for 37+ years.

Today I focus on three areas to consider:

- 1) Lack of choice or competitiveness in elections
- 2) Division of school districts
- 3) Conforming district boundaries to natural boundaries

Election Choice and Competitiveness

When speaking to groups and individuals, I have repeatedly heard statements like “Why bother to vote when my vote doesn’t matter?”, “There is only one candidate running so why vote?” Their frustration and disillusionment are palpable. Democracy is based on as many eligible voters as possible lending their voice to the conversation.

I cite the 2018 and 2020 state Senate and House general election races as reasons for this disillusionment. **Note:** A win margin of greater than 10% is widely used as a standard to determine election competitiveness. Greater than 10% = safe district and considered non-competitive.

(See Table 1)

25 state Senate general elections in each year - 2018 and 2020:

2018- 17 were considered non-competitive and 6 of those had no opposing major party candidate

2020- 21 were considered non-competitive and 6 of those had no opposing major party candidate

203 state House general elections in 2018 and 2020:

2018- 176 were considered non-competitive and 78 of those had no opposing major party candidate

2020- 174 were considered non-competitive and 73 of those had no opposing major party candidate

You can see why many voters feel left out, left behind and believe they have no voice. Gerrymandering is not the only reason for these numbers but in many cases, it is a major contributing factor.

Divided School Districts

Although not mentioned in the Pennsylvania Constitution, this should be an important consideration. In many cases, the residents have common interests, concerns and values. In addition, having multiple legislators representing a school district hinders the ability to have their specific concerns and needs heard and addressed.

Dauphin County has 5 school districts that have at least 2 state representatives (See Table 2). Two of those five (Central Dauphin and Lower Dauphin school districts) have 4 representatives and 2 senators each. (See Figures 1 and 2). Although the physical size of the district may be a factor, there is no reasonable justification to split the districts among so many legislators.

Based on the 2020 census population data, Central Dauphin would justify 2 representatives and 1 senator. Lower Dauphin would justify 1 representative and 1 senator.

Conforming Districts Boundaries to Natural Boundaries

Senate District 48 includes Lebanon County and the lower portion of Dauphin County on the east shore of the Susquehanna River and a portion of the northeastern part of York County on the western shore (See Figure 3). Other than by air or water, there is no way to remain within District 48 and cross the river. There are no bridges that connect the district. This is a clear violation of the

meaning 'contiguous' in redistricting. (See Note). This type of violation should not occur.

Another geographic factor is the Allegheny Mountain ridges that transverse Dauphin County. (See Figure 4) These ridges create a sort of "demarcation line" and in many cases, a physical barrier between the southern, more urban and suburban parts of the county and the northern, more rural section. The road system also makes the connection between Northern and Southern Dauphin County 'challenging'. The issues, priorities, concerns and culture of the residents of northern Dauphin County are different than those in the southern section and more in line with Northumberland and Schuylkill Counties. I suggest that Dauphin County be kept whole as much as possible, but when division is necessary for population, these factors be considered.

Although Middle Paxton Township (See Figure 5) is among the ridges, because it is in Central Dauphin School District, it should be included in the southern section. Also, East Hanover Township, because of its historical, cultural, and economic connections to Derry, Londonderry, South Hanover and Conewego Townships and Hummelstown Borough should be combined in one southern district.

In Summary

The districts you draw will impact legislative agenda, policy and Pennsylvania politics, for at least the next decade. I ask that you take into serious consideration whenever possible the following:

- **Election choice and competitiveness**
- **Division of school districts**
- **Conforming to natural boundaries**

It is also crucial that the public be given ample time to review the preliminary maps and adequate opportunity for comment before completing the final maps.

The opportunity to make an historic, positive impact on PA state legislative redistricting and restoration of the public trust rests in your hands. I commend your efforts at transparency and public input thus far. However, it is not what is said, but the end result that will determine your success. Citizens are calling for transparency, accountability, meaningful public input and well defined, sensible map-drawing criteria. They are counting on you.

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Thank you again for the opportunity to speak with you this evening.

NOTE: A district is considered contiguous if all parts of the district are in physical contact with some other part of the district. Generally, a district is also considered ***contiguous if the district is split by a body of water, but there is a method of transport over the water, such as a bridge.***

Ballotpedia

Table 1

PENNSYLVANIA STATE LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS
CHOICE AND COMPETITIVENESS

| | |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 2018 | 2020 |
| STATE SENATE RACES (25) | STATE SENATE RACES |
| UNOPPOSED BY MAJOR PARTY CANDIDATE | UNOPPOSED BY MAJOR PARTY CANDIDATE |
| GREATER THAN 10% WIN MARGIN | GREATER THAN 10% WIN MARGIN |
| TOTAL CONSIDERED NON COMPETITIVE | TOTAL CONSIDERED NON COMPETITIVE |
| | |
| 2018 | 2020 |
| STATE HOUSE RACES (203) | STATE HOUSE RACES (203) |
| UNOPPOSED BY MAJOR PARTY CANDIDATE | UNOPPOSED BY MAJOR PARTY CANDIDATE |
| GREATER THAN 10% WIN MARGIN | GREATER THAN 10% WIN MARGIN |
| TOTAL CONSIDERED NON COMPETITIVE | TOTAL CONSIDERED NON COMPETITIVE |
| | |

Note: Information obtained from Ballotpedia

Table 2

DAUPHIN COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICTS

| SCHOOL DISTRICT | HOUSE DISTRICT | SENATE DISTRICT |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| CENTRAL DAUPHIN | 103-KIM (D) | 15-DISANTO (R) |
| | 104-HELM (R) | 48- GEBHARD R) |
| | 105-LEWIS(R) | |
| | 106-MEHAFIE (R) | |
| DERRY TOWNSHIP | 106-MEHAFIE (R) | 15-DISANTO (R) |
| HALIFAX AREA | 104-HELM (R) | 15-DISANTO (R) |
| HARRISBURG CITY | 103-KIM (D) | 15-DISANTO (R) |
| LOWER DAUPHIN | 98-HICKERNELL (R) | 15-DISANTO (R) |
| | 104-HELM (R) | 48-GEBHARD (R) |
| | 105-LEWIS (R) | |
| | 106-MEHAFIE (R) | |
| MIDDLETOWN AREA | 106-MEHAFIE (R) | 48-GEBHARD (R) |
| MILLERSBURG AREA | 104-HELM (R) | 15-DISANTO (R) |
| STEELTON-HIGHSPIRE | 103-KIM (D) | 48-GEBHARD (R) |
| SUSQUEHANNA | 104-HELM (R) | 15-DISANTO (R) |
| SUSQUENITA | 104-HELM (R) | 15-DISANTO (R) |
| | 86 (Perry)- STAMBAUGH (R) | |
| UPPER DAUPHIN | 104-HELM (R) | 15-DISANTO (R) |
| | 125-KERWIN (R) | |
| WILLIAMS VALLEY | 104-HELM (R) 125-KERWIN (R) | 15-DISANTO (R) |

Figure 1

House Districts

Dauphin School Districts

CD = Central Dauphin

- 103
- 104
- 105
- 106

LD = Lower Dauphin

- 98
- 104
- 105
- 106

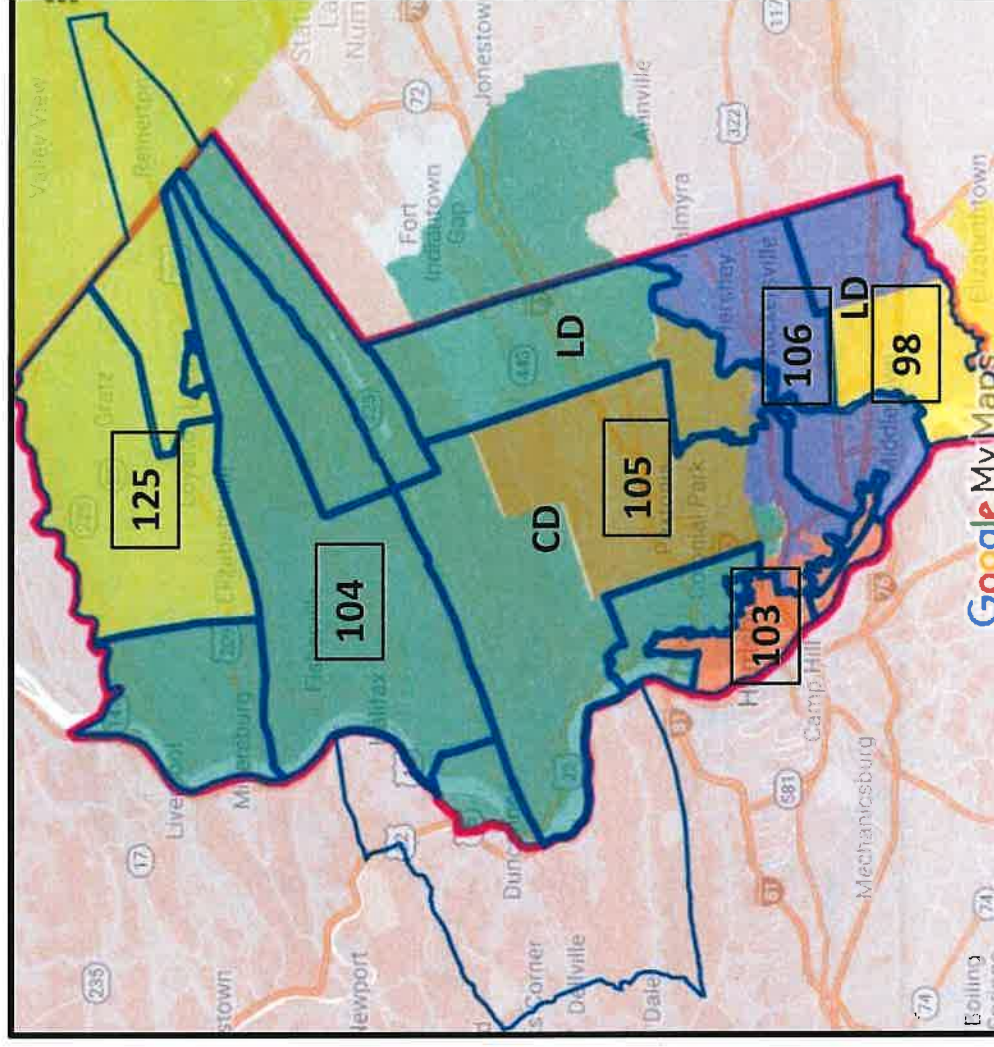


Figure 2

Senate Districts 15 and 48

Dauphin School Districts

CD = Central Dauphin

- 15
- 48

LD = Lower Dauphin

- 15
- 48

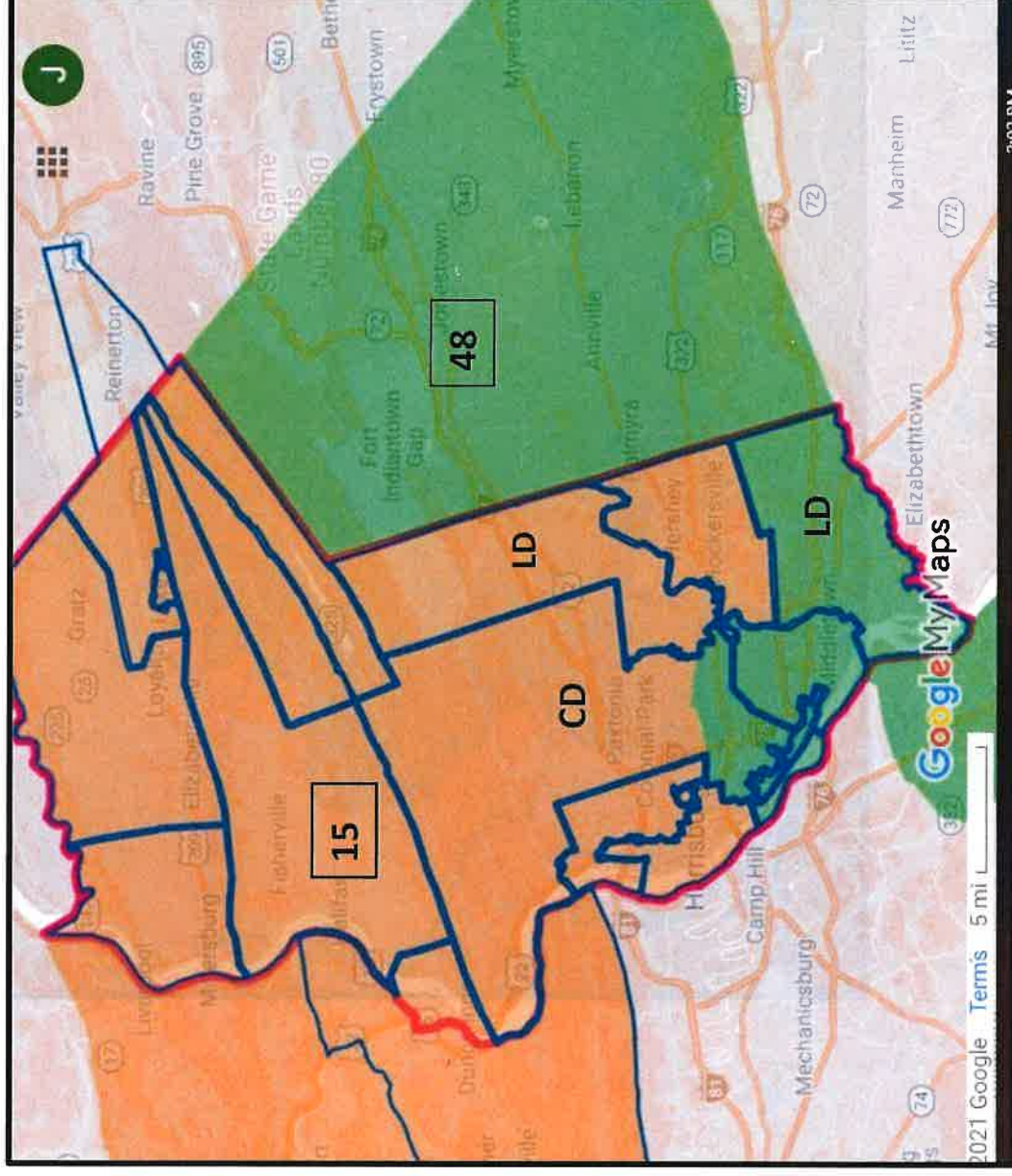


Figure 3

Senate District 48

- Lebanon
- Dauphin
- York

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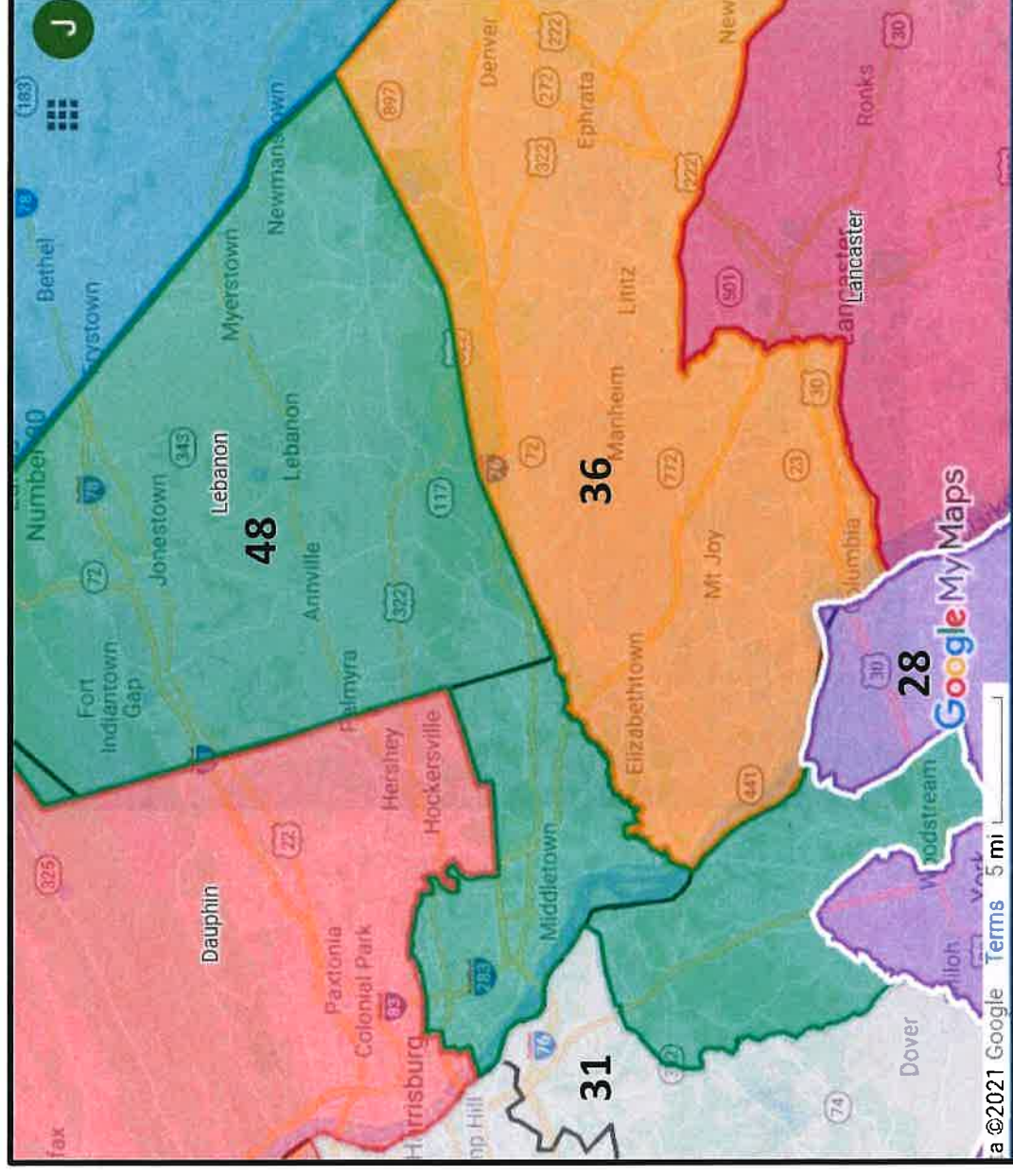


Figure 4

Dauphin County Geography

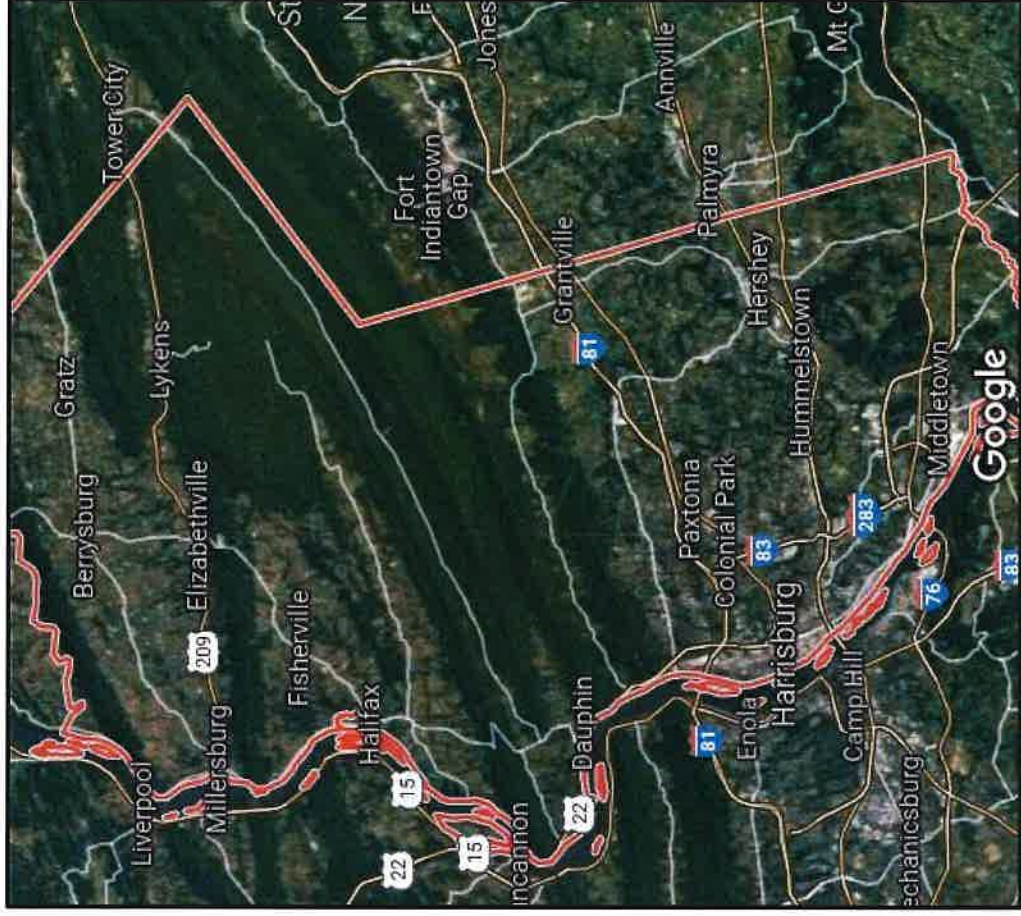


Figure 5

DAUPHIN COUNTY MUNICIPALITIES

