

Testimony of
Michael Goffredo
Bangor Area School District, Board President
to the
2021 Legislative Reapportionment Commission
January 7, 2022

Chairman Nordenberg, Esteemed Senate and House Leaders;

Good afternoon. Happy New Year and thank you for this opportunity.

My name is Michael Goffredo. I reside in the Borough of Roseto, Northampton County which is part of the 88 square miles that are the Bangor Area School District, currently wholly within District 137.

Before presenting my comments related to the proposed State House District reapportionment I would like to take a moment to share a partial bio that you may find relevant to my testimony:

- I have had the honor of serving as an elected official for over 42 years, previously as a member of Borough Council and currently in my 15th year as a School Director.
- I am a proud member of the Volunteer Fire Service, approaching 50 years of active duty with Northampton County Station 34, where I have been Fire Chief for 45 years.
- In my business life I am the Owner of a General Contracting firm building Schools, public buildings, public housing, retail, industrial, and other commercial projects in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland for over 40 years.

Again, I thank the Commission for this chance to testify. I'm here to share the concerns of our School Board and Administration, along with those expressed to me by other elected municipal officials of the Bangor Area School District and residents throughout the Slate Belt.

Having watched the first segment of yesterday's session, hearing the opening statement of Chairman Nordenberg, the comments of other presenters, and being captivated by the metrics and maps, it is obvious that the Commission has undertaken a monumental task. I must commend you all for your efforts and diligence.

It also causes me to recognize that issues that I bring to the table pale when compared to the scale of those that you hope to address throughout the Commonwealth.

As I mentioned, the Bangor Area School District is currently part of District 137. The proposed plan and mapping result in the following:

1. It Removes the School District from District 137.
2. The map attaches a portion of the District – Washington Township along with the Boroughs of Bangor, Roseto, and East Bangor - to District 138, and
3. The plan shifts the Borough of Portland and Upper Mount Bethel Township – which together comprise approximately 43 square miles (almost 50%) of the School District – to District 176 in western Monroe County. This is our primary concern.

The splitting of the Bangor Area School District raises the primary issue for our constituents; the fracturing of the SLATE BELT.

Pennsylvania's Slate Belt - now essentially the Bangor and Pen Argyl School Districts - is rich in culture. There is a unique history going back to 1848 that is well preserved by the curators of the Slate Belt Heritage Museum.

The School Districts of Bangor and Pen Argyl are vital to the Slate Belt. Professional, financial, and social interactions have been nurtured for generations. One example; In 2018 the Bangor Slaters and the Pen Argyl Green Knight football teams met for the 100th time in the rivalry known as "The Battle of the Slate Belt". There are not many districts that can make a similar claim.

The traditions continue and there are many more that I would love to share with you, but I don't have enough time today to expand on the "uniqueness" that is the Slate Belt.

Another important consideration for us at home; The spirit of Volunteerism is alive in the Slate Belt. The ten (10) Slate Belt Fire Departments – including Station 31 in Portland and Station 39 in Upper Mt. Bethel Township – are all part of Northampton County Sector 3 Fire Protection District. We share resources and efficiencies to protect the lives and properties of our residents and businesses. These dedicated volunteers deserve to be represented by ONE (1) State Representative for many clear reasons.

Also; The Bangor Area Industrial Development Authority, comprised of all six (6) municipalities in the School District, is currently gaining momentum with hundreds of millions of dollars of commercial development now becoming a reality. Most of that is slated to occur in Upper Mount Bethel Township with its unique access to the Route 80 traffic corridor in adjacent New Jersey. Those efforts and future tax revenues will benefit all School District property owners by reducing the ratio of property taxes on residential real estate. It is imperative that they succeed. The Authority needs and deserves undivided legislative support.

The ENTIRE Slate Belt area – from the Wind Gap to the Delaware River - clearly fits the definition of a Community of Interest. All of Pennsylvania deserves a statewide map that respects and preserves communities of interest.

A couple of additional points:

Mr. Chairman, It is my understanding that the Constitution requires compactness, as much as possible. In this instance there could be important geographic questions related to the connectivity with Upper Mount Bethel Township, as that linkage occurs at a small border with Hamilton Township, Monroe County – essentially along land known as the Appalachian Trail – at the top of a mountain. I would suggest that the newly redesigned map might not be truly deemed “compact”?

I would further suggest that connecting a vital part of our District to an adjacent western portion of Monroe County, at the top of a mountain, where the communities share NO COMMON INTEREST, is not beneficial to either community.

In closing, I would ask, on behalf of ALL Slate Belt Communities and Bangor Area School District residents, that the Commission find a way to keep this important Community of Interest together. Please do not disenfranchise the residents of Portland Borough and Upper Mount Bethel Township. Keep the Bangor Area School District intact and within ONE State House District.

I am also attaching Resolutions adopted by the Bangor Area School Board, the Borough of Bangor, and Upper Mount Bethel Township for your records. There are more expected.

Wishing you continued success as you work towards a final solution. I thank you for your time and consideration.

**BANGOR AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT
123 Five Points Richmond Road
Bangor, Pennsylvania**

Resolution to Condemn Preliminary 2021 Pennsylvania State House Map

WHEREAS, the new preliminary State House Map splits the Bangor Area School District unnecessarily by removing Upper Mount Bethel Township and Portland Borough and placing them in a second State House District; and

WHEREAS, the new preliminary map significantly decreases the compactness of the Bangor Area School District as is required by the Pennsylvania Constitution; and

WHEREAS, Upper Mount Bethel Township and Portland Borough would be represented by a district that is largely based in Monroe County as opposed to their County of residence, Northampton County; and

WHEREAS, the Bangor Area School District is one of only two school districts in the "Slate Belt." The "Slate Belt" is a clear and distinct community of interest with a rich cultural heritage, a deep sense of community, and a dedication to public service as evidenced by commitment to education, including the arts, sports, and volunteerism. "The Slate Belt" should be kept within a single legislative district; and

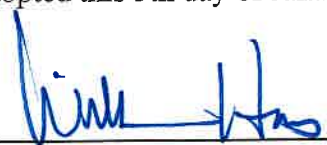
WHEREAS, the new preliminary State House Map would reduce the ability of the school district community to act as one voice on adverse matters; and

WHEREAS, from a school district perspective, based on the population and location of its community, the makeup and drawing of the preliminary State House Map appears gerrymandered;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that this resolution be spread upon the minutes of the meeting of January 5, 2022.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be submitted to the 2021 Legislative Reapportionment Commission of Pennsylvania.

Adopted this 5th day of January 2022.




Superintendent



President of the Board



Secretary to the Board



Date

BOROUGH OF BANGOR
NORTHAMPTON COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA
RESOLUTION 2022-

**A RESOLUTION TO CONDEMN PRELIMINARY 2021 PENNSYLVANIA
HOUSE AND SENATE MAPS**

WHEREAS, the “Slate Belt,” of which Bangor Borough is a part, is a clear and distinct community of interest with a rich cultural heritage, a deep sense of community, and a dedication to public service as evidenced by commitment to governance, inter-municipal cooperation, legislative support, and volunteerism. “The Slate Belt” should be kept within a single House and Senate legislative district; and

WHEREAS, the new Preliminary State House and Senate Maps split the Slate Belt region unnecessarily by removing Bangor Borough and its neighbors from their current district and placing them in a second district; and

WHEREAS, the new preliminary maps significantly decrease the compactness of the Slate Belt region as is required by the Constitution; and

WHEREAS, large portions of the region will be represented with districts that have no affiliation with or understanding of Bangor or the Slate Belt area; and

WHEREAS, the new preliminary State House and Senate Maps would reduce the ability of Bangor and the Slate Belt community to act as one voice on adverse matters; and

WHEREAS, the Legislative Reapportionment Commission should have held a public Hearing and made available for full public review preliminary maps prior to a formal vote; and

WHEREAS, from a Borough perspective, based on the population and location of its community, the makeup and drawing of the Preliminary State House and Senate Maps appears gerrymandered;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the BOROUGH COUNCIL OF THE BOROUGH OF BANGOR adopts this resolution the 4th day of January, 2022.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be submitted to the 2021 Legislative Reapportionment Commission of Pennsylvania.

BOROUGH COUNCIL OF THE
BOROUGH OF BANGOR

BY: James W. Kresge
James W. Kresge, President

ATTEST:

Tracy Palmer
Tracy Palmer, Secretary

