

**Testimony of Jean Handley
Dauphin County Resident
Before the Legislative Reapportionment Commission
Hearing on Preliminary House and Senate Maps
January 7, 2022**

Good Morning Chairman Nordenberg, Leaders McClinton, Ward, Benninghoff, and Costa. I am a long-time resident of Dauphin County and, full disclosure - the Dauphin County Coordinator for Fair Districts PA. However, I appear today as a resident. I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you this morning about the preliminary state House and Senate maps.

I applaud your efforts to solicit public input through the many hearings and website and hope this will set a standard for redistricting in the decades to come. However, it would have been helpful for the public to know the criteria the LRC planned to use and priorities assigned to each when starting this process in order to provide more focused input. There has been prior testimony regarding metric performance. Generally speaking, the LRC preliminary House and Senate maps are better than the current maps created during redistricting in 2011. That being said, adjustments can always be made to produce an end product that is more beneficial to all citizens of the Commonwealth.

As a resident of Dauphin County, I limit my further comments to the districts drawn in that area.

SENATE MAP

Since the 2020 Census population exceeds the size of a new senate district, unfortunately, the county must be divided.

The Senate map creates a more competitive district 15 which is more reflective of the suburban, urban and industrial areas of the county and considers the unique commercial, environmental and infrastructure issues of the lower half of Dauphin County. No school districts are divided in District 15.

The northern part of Dauphin County above the ridges, is much more rural, agrarian and conservative and is similar to other areas in District 34. However, the Susquehanna River divides Perry and Cumberland Counties from northern Dauphin. The only direct link to travel between the east and west portions of District 34 is the Clarks Ferry Bridge near Duncannon that carries Route 322/22. Otherwise, one must travel through District 15 to access bridges in the Harrisburg area. An alternative would be to include northern Dauphin with parts of Schuylkill, Lebanon or Northumberland Counties thus eliminating the Susquehanna River split. The only Dauphin County divided school district in District 34 is Williams Valley which extends into Schuylkill County (District 29).

HOUSE MAP

The House map creates districts that are more compact with only one (103) extending beyond the county borders. They are more

representative of the various 'Communities of Interest'. Districts are also more competitive which reflects the registered voter population of Dauphin County. Registered voters of both major parties were almost equal in the Cumberland County area included in District 103.

Central Dauphin School District is only divided among 3 districts and Lower Dauphin School Districts divided among 2 instead of the current 4 for each district. However, by dividing the city of Harrisburg between Districts 103 and 104, the Harrisburg School District with its significant challenges would be divided instead of whole as in the current House map.

Areas of concern:

District 103

Debate continues about whether to include parts of eastern Cumberland County and Dauphin County in one district. There are two schools of thought:

1. Do not divide Harrisburg City and do not include communities from the west shore. Harrisburg has its own unique challenges, significant black and other minority populations, is a 'community of interest' and should remain whole.

or

2. Include parts of Cumberland. Proposed District 103 has some common challenges and concerns. This is also a shared area for

recreation, shopping, restaurants and medical care for residents from both sides of the river. To include communities that help increase diversity and equity may be beneficial to legislative achievements for this area. However, there are also significant differences between the East and West Shores that may present challenges for a legislator.

Hummelstown Borough

Hummelstown has strong ties with East and South Hanover, Derry, Conewago and Londonderry Townships and is part of the Lower Dauphin School District. It should be included with these municipalities in one district. By doing so, it would eliminate splitting the school district and help represent the common interests of this area.

Lower Paxton District 22

There is an interesting “tail” protruding from District 125 separating Districts 105 and 106. This is Lower Paxton District 22 and its residents have much more in common with either those of District 105 or Derry and South Hanover Townships in District 106.

River Communities

There has been previous testimony regarding keeping the River Communities together as a Community of Interest starting with Harrisburg City and ending with Londonderry Township. The LRC

map has divided this area between Districts 104 and 106. If possible, the communities would benefit by remaining in one district.

IN CONCLUSION

I am not a skilled mapper and thus, do not know the impact of these potential changes on either Dauphin County or the LRC map as a whole. The FDPA People's House and Senate maps may offer alternatives and solutions to adjust and improve these districts. If there is a possibility of making any adjustments that are not too disruptive, I ask that you please consider doing so.

Thank you for your continued efforts to produce House and Senate maps that are representative of all the citizens of the Commonwealth. I wish you all the best while working toward finalization of both the House and Senate district maps.

