

Co-Chairs, Redistricting Committee, and my fellow Oregonians:

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this important process.

My name is Jamie McLeod-Skinner. I graduated high school in Southern Oregon and live in rural Central Oregon, in Jefferson County. I serve in a variety of elected, appointed, and volunteer roles, but my testimony today is on my own behalf.

The task before you is a profound one: to establish the political boundaries to enable Oregonians to be fairly represented and for our voices to be heard in the leadership and policies of our state.

Because you are establishing political boundaries, this is an inherently political process. And because of the fierce political times we are in, the pressure upon you is enormous.

Your role as stewards of the State of Oregon has never been more weighty. Your decision will influence who will lead our State through the decade of challenges and hope that lie ahead.

Oregonians cannot succeed in being joint caretakers of this remarkable place we call home if we do not find a way to work together, if the face of leadership does not reflect the faces of all Oregonians, and if we do not overcome the divides between us. This charge corresponds with the direction given to you by Statute (ORS 188.010) for equal population, access, connection, continuity, and not dividing communities of interest.

First, to the face of leadership: the history of our State holds much pain. The grief and shame of the past will not be reconciled by ignoring reality, but by setting the stage for leaders with the understanding to help us face our past and move us forward. Listen to the testimonies of Tribal and other BIPOC communities on how to accomplish this statewide need.

Second, on overcoming the urban-rural divide: this cannot be addressed by further dividing us into political factions. It will only make it worse. Political blocs are not communities of interest. Draft maps such as Plan B will further divide us into such political camps rather than recognize the opportunity for pursuing our shared goals. Natural resource solutions need both urban and rural advocates – our needs cannot be met by isolating us in rural-only districts. While it is true that the density of our communities may impact how we interact, we are all interdependent on our neighbors. The drawing of political boundaries can either further divide us or set the stage to elect leaders charged with understanding and helping us achieve our common purpose. We need more elected leaders accountable to rural areas and Plan B will only exacerbate the urban-rural divide.

Across our state, I have seen firsthand the promise of Oregonians working together – from natural resource management to educating our children to wildfire recovery – despite our political difference. I am optimistic and hopeful for our future.

The trajectory of our state will be your legacy. May you be remembered for setting us on a course toward healing and unity, and not further divide.

Good afternoon and good luck.

