March 16, 2021 Written Testimony on redistricting in Oregon

My name is Janice Reid and I am a member of Indivisible Roseburg. I have lived in Roseburg Oregon for over 35 years. I very much appreciate being able to provide written testimony on the important issue of redistricting in Oregon.

I am in favor of extending the deadline for redistricting so that the most recent information can be utilized. Since redistricting occurs once every 10 years, the technology available can be quite different than when the previous redistricting exercise occurred. In his thesis, Gareth A. Whaley (April 2019) showed that Ohio's congressional districts were highly gerrymandered. His solution was to use a computer based program. Although it is a subjective way to draw boundaries, he discovered that there may be tradeoffs with compactness and fairness. Some human input may need to be a part of the process but starting with computer software that is currently available and constantly improved, is necessary to restore faith in our congressional representation. Partisan gerrymandering needs to be eliminated. The effect on children was demonstrated by a 2020 report from the Center for American Progress. Funding for schools and children's programs were negatively affected when partisan gerrymandering occurred. "In Michigan, for example, Democratic candidates won the majority of the votes for both the House and the Senate, but Republican candidates won the majority of the seats in both chambers. This had a major negative impact on programs that benefit children. For example, Gov. Gretchen Whitmer (D-MI)—a supporter of full-day, universal preschool—proposed an $84 million increase to Michigan's preschool programs, but the legislature whittled that increase down to $5 million—an outcome made possible by partisan gerrymandering." Even middle school students in Alabama recognized the highly partisan process and came up with an award winning process to solve the partisan gerrymandering. There are multiple programs and software available, most at no cost.

There is ample opportunity and time for Oregon to research and ultimately utilize the available redistricting software programs. Although I have not researched the options, I would encourage Oregon Legislative teams to review the available software options and select an appropriate and comprehensive version. Our faith in Democracy and our electoral system stems from our faith in our process. Fairness needs to be central to the representation that we send to our legislative branches of our state and our federal government. The shapes of congressional districts will tell us a lot about the process and how unbiased it is. Gerrymandering needs to be eliminated so that future processes will remain fair. Utilizing software that is unbiased will make it more difficult for districts to be gerrymandered. This is important for both parties and all citizens to restore the faith in the system, now and into the future.

Gareth A. Whaley Thesis:

https://etd.ohiolink.edu/apexprod/rws_etd/send_file/send?accession=ouhonors1556293096705864&disposition=inline

Center for American Progress, May 2020 report

https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/democracy/reports/2020/05/28/485495/partisan-gerrymandering-hurts-kids/

Alabama Middle School Students Solve Redistricting issue.

https://www.forbes.com/sites/kevinanderton/2020/11/10/middle-students-solve-the-issue-of-gerrymandering-and-win-10000-prize-infographic/?sh=3fcfc74b7bfd

Free redistricting tools:

https://districtr.org/

https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/0120_redistricting_report.pdf

https://www.districtbuilder.org/

https://www.caliper.com/map-software/case-studies/california-crc-redistricting.htm