WRITTEN ONLY TESTIMONY
Sarah LaFrenz, President
American Federation of Teachers – Kansas
Hutchinson Redistricting Town Hall
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My name is Sarah LaFrenz and I am the president of AFT-Kansas, the largest union of public employees in the state.

Unions are about workplace democracy. This means giving employees a strong voice in how they are treated at work. We work hard for our members to achieve that kind of representation, of having a real say in such a major part of life. That is why I am here today to urge the Kansas state legislature to commit to a redistricting process that gives each person in the state of Kansas as strong and fair a voice as possible.

Our members are all over the state and belong to both major parties. We also have members who are affiliated with third parties and who are unaffiliated. The voice of any one of our members, regardless of their political party, is just as valid as that of any other. The same should be true of all Kansans when it comes to their political representation.

After the 2010 census, the Kansas state legislature was unable to come up with fair maps and the US District Court had to draw the maps. With the preliminary census numbers that we have available, we believe fair maps for the next decade will look pretty similar to the maps Kansas has right now.

We urge the legislature to draw fair districts that do not divide communities by cracking, like splitting a metro area into multiple congressional districts, or diminish their voices by packing people the state legislature views as opponents into a small number of districts. The cores of existing districts should remain intact, and districts should be as compact as possible.

For example, KCK and Johnson County have been in the same congressional district for 50 years. Because Kansas will retain the same number of congressional districts – 4 – and the Kansas City metro makes up a quarter of the state's population, any attempt to dismantle KS-03 is blatantly gerrymandering.

We urge the legislature to commit to an open and transparent process to produce fair maps. Part of that includes a schedule of public meetings that is not rushed or crammed into one week. These meetings should happen throughout the process, be accessible to the public, and seriously incorporate citizen feedback.

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