

TESTIMONY OF CHRISTINA OSTMEYER  
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KANSAS CITY, KANSAS

Members of the House and Senate Redistricting Committees:

My name is Christina Ostmeyer; I am a resident of Kansas City, KS as well as the Communications Director for Kansas Appleseed Center for Law and Justice, a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to the belief that Kansans, working together, can build a state full of thriving, inclusive, and just communities.

I know you've now heard from dozens of Kansans from all across the state, from my hometown of Colby to Chanute to here in KCK. Much of their testimony has reiterated the same messages: Make the Kansas redistricting process equitable, make the process transparent, and make sure Kansans are accurately represented in their districts. These town halls are a start toward achieving these ideals, but that is all they are. More must be done.

While the Census data used to draw our districts was not available in time for this testimony, it's no secret that interests are intending to draw the maps in such a way that Wyandotte County would fall within the First District.

Growing up in Colby, there's always been a lot to be proud of: Our agriculture, our work ethic, our closeness. The First District has a multitude of unique attributes, but there are also deeply troubling parts of our history that have shaped the communities as well.

Many of the towns I grew up around – going to swim meets or debate tournaments or family reunions in – were sundown towns that enforced segregation through racist laws, intimidation, and violence, some even until the late 1960s. And while Western Kansas is more diverse and continues to become so, the impacts of that racist history shaped and continue to influence communities today.

Black, Brown, Indigenous, and non-white communities are consistently and systematically erased, their votes are suppressed, and the history of using congressional maps as another way to discriminate and dilute the voices of non-white people is long and storied. Do not let this legacy continue.

I love my roots in Western Kansas and there's work being done there to confront systematic inequities. And I love my home now in Wyandotte County. Moving to Wyandotte County, I see many of the same values I grew up around here as well: Community, tenacity, energy. And while issues in housing, infrastructure,

representation, and beyond affect all parts of Kansas, how they affect Wyandotte County is unique compared to the rural needs of the First District.

I know that this committee can ensure the representation of both the First and Third districts remains fair.

In addition to protecting our maps in Kansas, I ask that the public engagement process becomes broader, more intentional, and more accessible. We hope to see additional forums scheduled around working-class Kansans and families' schedule, materials and information should be in numerous languages, and robust outreach to communities who are historically underrepresented.

Thank you for your time today and consideration today and know that we're happy to provide any support necessary to help ensure our maps in Kansas are fair and equitable.

Christina Ostmeyer

Kansas City, KS resident

Communications Director for Kansas Appleseed Center for Law and Justice