

August 11, 2021

Written Testimony from:

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Attendee at the Overland Park redistricting meeting on August 12, 2021

To committee members, attendees, and other impacted parties:

Thank you for your time today. My name is Melissa Gard. I live in Prairie Village, KS. When viewing my voting record, you will quickly see that I am a passionate believer in participatory governing. I believe it is my responsibility today to represent all of the people who could not attend one of your town hall meetings. It is with the knowledge of that reliance of others that I implore you to take a moment to pause, and accept that more thought and time should go into this decision process.

I am privileged enough to work for an organization that puts people first, and believes in speaking out for those who cannot speak for themselves. Because of this, when I asked my boss just a week ago if I could take time off to be here today, it was a quick yes. This is not something that a large majority of the population that redistricting impacts have an option to do. The process through which you have called these meetings, and the timeline in which you are pushing them through, is egregious.

Take a few moments. Our government should be run and led by all of our people, and you should be prioritizing giving the opportunity to testify about this process to all demographic groups. Ensuring the accurate representation of voters is foundational to our democracy, and hearing how the process might impact people, negatively or positively, should be a focus of this committee. I believe the most important first step towards that would be opening up more Town Halls on more diverse days and times, giving more people an opportunity to speak.

We should be focusing this process on the voices and needs of the people in our communities. Ensuring they are heard, ensuring they count, and ensuring you are doing the work of the people over politics, should be task number one. We deserve your time and commitment to this process.

Best wishes,

Melissa L. Gard

Prairie Village, KS