

Chairman Grove and Members of the House State Government Committee, let me begin by commending you for holding these hearings as a means of providing transparency into the redistricting process, and for reaching out to the various regions of the state in order to gain perspective on the operations and legislative needs of our companies and our citizens. I greatly appreciate the opportunity to testify before your committee this afternoon, and offer my comments with no political agenda, but solely as an effort to describe the geographic importance of the North Central region of the state as a community of interest that shares a common identity as the beginning of Pennsylvania's forest products supply chain.

My name is Amy Shields. I am a lifelong resident of Elk County and the Executive Director of the Allegheny Hardwood Utilization Group (or AHUG). AHUG is a non-profit organization formed in 1984 for the purpose of promoting the long-term economic growth and development of the hardwood industry and associated ancillary operations within the 14 counties of Northwest and North Central Pennsylvania. In accomplishing this mission, AHUG focuses its efforts on industry workforce development and training, promotion of hardwood manufacturing and products, public education, support for hardwood research and development, and the furthering of sustainable, science-based management of the region's natural resource assets. Prior to assuming the role of AHUG Executive Director, I spent nearly 30 years in private industry, owning and managing hardwood sawmills across the state, with our principal location being in Elk County.

With nearly 17 million acres of forestland and a business presence in every one of the Commonwealth's sixty-seven counties, Pennsylvania is the number one producer of hardwood products in the United States. Our hardwood industry employs nearly 63,000 individuals in more than 2,100 operations state-wide, representing approximately 10% of Pennsylvania's manufacturing workforce and providing over \$36 billion per year in total economic impact to the state's economy.

While these are impressive statistics, a glance at a topography map of Pennsylvania will provide insight into how the primary and secondary manufacturing sectors of our industry are dispersed across the state and why Pennsylvania's "North Central" region has a unique identity. The counties that comprise the North Central region are the most heavily forested within the state. In fact, our region is home to some of the highest quality hardwood forests in the world, making "North Central" the beginning of the hardwood supply chain in PA. Our region includes those individuals and companies who own and manage vast acres of forestland, who harvest and haul thousands of truckloads of logs and pulpwood from those acres, who produce and sell millions of board feet of logs and lumber, and who utilize those products and their residuals in the production of paper, packaging, home heating materials, furniture and flooring components and other products. Some of the largest private land holdings in the state are located in the North Central region and are owned by hardwood companies and timber investment management organizations (or TIMOs). The largest concentration of consulting foresters, logging professionals and independent hardwood trucking companies can be found in Northwest and North Central, PA, along with numerous hardwood sawmills - including several of the highest producing and most technologically advanced operations in the country. The North Central region is home to one of only two existing paper manufacturing facilities left in PA, as well as a global packaging manufacturer, and several wood pellet and wood component/panel producers.

While there are also secondary manufacturers in the region who produce solid wood flooring, furniture and the like, the primary production sector is the predominant presence within the North Central

region. Our companies share similar concerns in regards to forest health, access to raw materials, environmental issues and sustainability, trade policy, workforce and labor, infrastructure needs, and on and on. Having the ability to speak to our legislative representatives with a singular voice – and for them to understand who and what we are through a singular reference to “North Central Pennsylvania’s hardwood industry” is critical. That the North Central region continues to include Jefferson and Clearfield counties is important, as Interstate 80 is key to the survival of the sawmills and residual product producers in our region. We must continue to have a voice in that conversation. While there are numerous private forestland owners within the North Central region, there is also a great deal of public land under both federal and state ownership. Our companies must maintain their ability to have a united voice in that conversation. As energy, trade, tax and environmental policies evolve, the hardwood companies and citizens of the North Central region must maintain their ability to communicate with their legislative representatives as one. Congressional district maps define our regions, they shape the manner in which we are represented, and they greatly impact the ability of organizations like mine to work effectively on behalf of the men and women whose livelihoods depend upon Pennsylvania’s working forests.

Forest products are an agricultural resource, and we are proud to be counted among Pennsylvania’s agricultural sector. Currently the Member of Congress representing most of North Central Pennsylvania is the ranking member of the US House Committee on Agriculture, a post that has traditionally been held by individuals from western and midwestern states. That our region of Pennsylvania has produced a representative who has focused so heavily on agricultural issues – including silviculture and forestry – and achieved a key leadership role, speaks to the importance of our industry as a regional community of interest. When our region seeks to be heard in Washington, DC, we speak with a common identity characterized by our rural communities that depend on our proximity to Pennsylvania’s working forests. We respectfully urge you to consider these dynamics as you craft Congressional district maps based on updated population numbers for the upcoming decade.

Once again, I appreciate the opportunity to represent the hardwood industry of North Central PA in today’s testimony, and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have now or in the future.

Respectfully submitted by:

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