

TO: North Central Hearing on Congressional Redistricting

RE: Congressional Redistricting in Pennsylvania

DATE: October 5, 2021

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding Congressional Redistricting in Pennsylvania. It is my pleasure to provide my thoughts on this topic.

My name is Jeffrey P. Reber and I currently serve as Commissioner in Union County, PA. As such, I have experienced the needs of the county I serve as well as the region in which I have lived for my entire lifetime. My region, Union County and the surrounding counties, is commonly referred to as the Central Susquehanna Valley. For the purposes of my testimony, I will define the Central Susquehanna Valley as containing the following counties: Union, Snyder, Northumberland, and Montour.

The residents of the Central Susquehanna Valley share a common bond that extends beyond our county borders. In fact, our region shares economic, agricultural, environmental, social and healthcare resources that overlap county borders. Our region also has natural boundaries that help to define the several counties as one cohesive area. These shared interests provide the basis for my suggestion that the Central Susquehanna Valley be included within one congressional district.

In addition, each county within our region contains many municipalities that also overlap in key areas and should be kept within one congressional district. This will allow the municipalities to be better served and the region as a whole to be served more effectively as well.

As a county commissioner, we often are called upon to work with our neighboring counties to accomplish our goals. Sometimes, we also need the assistance of elected officials at both the state and national level. Having one congressional representative who is also invested in our communities enables us to more quickly access information and services that are vital to our residents. Our own efforts to serve our counties is made more difficult when we must also coordinate with more than one congressperson, thus potentially delaying or limiting our ability to serve our county residents most effectively. It is my belief that our region also obtains better visibility within one congressional district when our population comprises a larger percentage of said district.

Additionally, as the chair of the Union County Election Board, I appreciate the fact that we can more easily refer voters to their elected officials. The challenge of properly referring voters to their representatives is much greater when multiple representatives represent only portions of our county, as happens now with our state delegation. The more efficiently that we can refer citizens to their elected officials, the quicker our citizens can receive answers. I am certain that everyone can appreciate how we favor consistency and reliability within the election process.

Union County is blessed to be located in central Pennsylvania, where we have a thriving healthcare industry that employs thousands of residents in direct healthcare services as well as ancillary companies. The vast majority of those healthcare employees work in the two main hospital systems that cover our area: Evangelical Community Hospital located in Union County and Geisinger Health System located in Montour County. These hospitals also serve the majority of the four county's residents, thus further linking our region in a manner that stretches beyond individual county boundaries. Since healthcare related issues are vital to everyone, it is most effective to have one unified congressional district serving

this constituency. There are literally tens of thousands of central Pennsylvania residents who would benefit from the focus that one congressional representative would provide.

Our county and region also benefit by being a part of only one congressional district with our tourist industry, which is the second largest industry in Union County. Union County is marketed as a part of the "Susquehanna River Valley". As such, tourists and many residents consider our entire region to be a beacon of enjoyment that spans Union County and its' neighboring counties. This reach is consistent with the healthcare footprint previously mentioned. They are also the counties with which we work most closely. So, it stands to reason that we believe our region should be included in one congressional district.

Just like Pennsylvania as a whole, our county and region possess amazing agricultural resources that span every community. As with other industries, the agricultural community and industry rely on regional access to markets, which often expands beyond individual county lines. It is quite common for farmers from union county to buy and sell products from a wide geographical array of suppliers and consumers. Due to the enormous number of regulations inflicted upon the agricultural community, farmers and their partners must stay in regular contact with their local, state and national elected delegation. Because of this, it is vitally important that they have one unified voice that can speak for them. It is a matter of both expediency and effectiveness when their livelihoods are involved. And without local farmers, we would all be in very dire straits.

I am also a business owner serving the Central Susquehanna Valley. As such, I have experienced the benefits of having one congressional point of contact when I had questions or comments regarding legislation, referral to a another point of contact or have needed to find resources to assist my growth. Knowing that I can reach out to just one person who knows my county and can think beyond my borders is invaluable when help is needed.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding the congressional redistricting process. I look forward to answering any questions you may have about my testimony.

Respectfully Submitted:

Jeffrey P. Reber
Union County Commissioner