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Senate of Pennsylvania

September 18, 2017

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The Honorable Mike Folmer
337 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17102

Via Hand Delivery

Chairman Folmer,

I am writing to you today in my capacity as Democratic Chair to formally request a hearing of the Senate State Government Committee on redistricting reform measures. As lawmakers, we can no longer ignore the rising tide of public opinion in favor of reforming the system by which Pennsylvania's legislative and congressional districts are created. A hearing of the facts at hand, including the history and legal basis of our current system of reapportionment, a comparative study of how other states handle this process, as well as alternative strategies for future decennial redistricting in Pennsylvania, is necessary to begin a process of addressing those concerns.

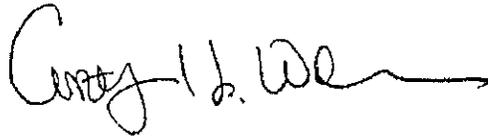
Clearly, testimony should avoid the particulars of any pending litigation related to Pennsylvania's redistricting process. However, it is our constitutional responsibility to legislate, and it is the duty of our committee to review important matters of state government. The manner in which legislative districts are drawn at both the state and federal levels is the very foundation of our representative democracy. Grassroots citizens groups across the Commonwealth have created a groundswell of public awareness and advocacy on this critical issue, raising concerns that partisan aims have overtaken fair community representation. This same concern is often reflected in racial gerrymandering litigation. It took 55 years - from the time the U.S. Supreme Court decided it could even entertain legal challenges to a state legislature's redistricting plan in *Baker v. Carr* - for the Court to finally declare that state legislatures cannot use partisan aims as an excuse to redraw districts based on race. *Cooper v. Harris*, 137 S.ct 1455, 1473 n.7 (U.S. 2017) ("In other words, the sorting of voters on the grounds of their race remains suspect even if race is meant to function as a proxy for other (including political) characteristics."). We cannot wait another 55 years for the Court to do the state legislatures' job in correcting the many other ills vexing our current system of redistricting for us. We have a duty to examine the issue now.

So often, we hear from our colleagues that Pennsylvanians should decide when it comes to weighty constitutional matters such as this. For the people's voice to be heard at the ballot box, we as legislators must take the first step. A public hearing is just the beginning of a very

complicated and lengthy process in amending our state's constitution or statutes, with ample opportunities to develop a consensus agreement around this issue.

Thank you for your attention to this matter; I look forward to discussing it in greater detail in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anthony H. Williams", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Anthony Hardy Williams
PA Senate -- 8th District