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## **An Analysis of Public Input on Michigan's Redistricting Process**

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Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy  
Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy  
University of Michigan

# **An Analysis of Public Input on Michigan's Redistricting Process**

The Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy

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By Malak Kalasho | April 2024

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## **Introduction: Michigan's Redistricting Process**

In 2018, Michigan residents voted in favor of Proposal 18-2, a ballot measure that shifted redistricting authority from the state legislature to an independent commission.<sup>1</sup> By August 2020, 13 commissioners, made up of Democrats, Republicans, and Independents, were appointed to serve on the Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission (MICRC) to redraw the state's electoral maps. The Commission began holding public meetings across the state beginning in September 2020 and finalized the maps by December 2021. During this period, they received approximately 30,000 spoken and written testimonies.

In 2021, a team of students at the Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy (CLOSUP) in the University of Michigan's Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy began an analysis of the constituent testimonies made to the Commission throughout the redistricting process. This paper provides an overview of Michigan's redistricting process based on qualitative analysis of the testimonies.

## **Background: Research Methodology and Codebook Development**

Using transcripts from the MICRC's archives, the research team compiled 5,521 of the approximately 30,000 testimonies. The team developed a codebook of five main category codes that encompassed 62 total individual codes (see Appendix A). The five category codes were: 1) Region (e.g., Metro Detroit, Lansing Area, Northern MI); 2) Communities of Interest (COI) (e.g., African American, Unions, Rural); 3) Process (e.g., Hiring Staff, Hearing Conduct, Accessibility); 4) Maps (e.g., Pro Draft Map, Partisan Fairness and Competitive Districts, Compactness); and 5) Other (e.g., Prison Gerrymandering, Commissioner Political Affiliation).

Next, the team reviewed the testimonies, assigning up to nine relevant codes to each one (see Appendix B for a comprehensive overview of the team's qualitative research methodology). There were about 16,200 references to any of the 62 codes that came up throughout the redistricting process, suggesting that, on average, commenters referenced three main themes in

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<sup>1</sup> Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission. (n.d.). State of Michigan. Retrieved April 5, 2024, from <https://www.michigan.gov/micrc>.

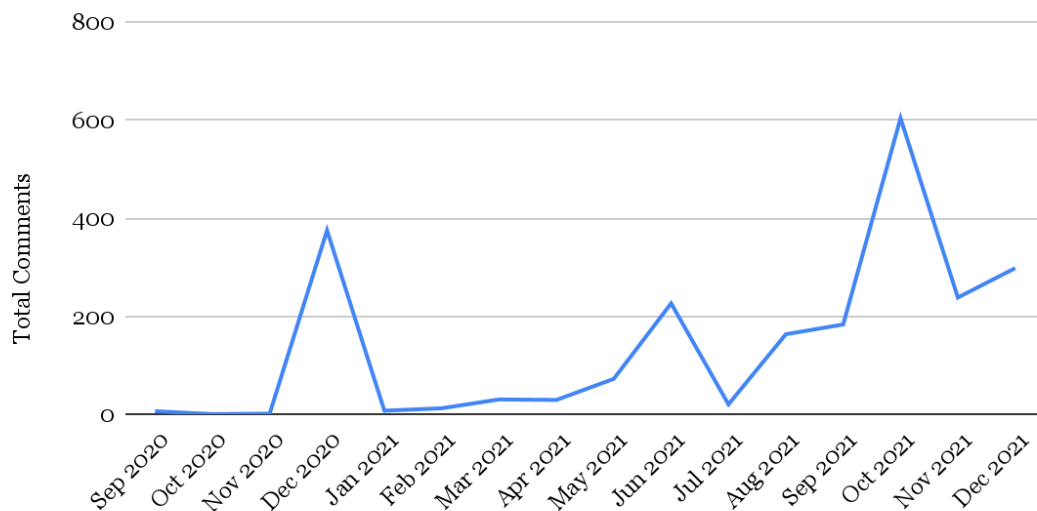
each testimony. The rest of this paper provides an assessment of the most salient themes and concerns in constituent testimonies based on all of the assigned codes. The data analysis was supported by Dr. Alton Worthington, a lecturer in public policy at the Ford School.

### Most Commonly Raised Constituent Concern: Partisanship

An assessment of the most common themes showed that the individual code ‘Partisan Fairness and Competitive Districts’ within the Maps category came up in over 40% of comments, indicating constituents' notable concern about the partisanship of proposed maps despite the nonpartisan approach of the process. Figure 1 shows the frequency of references to partisanship comments throughout the redistricting period, indicating that it was a salient issue throughout the entire process. In October 2021, constituents raised partisanship concerns in over 600 comments, likely related to the upcoming election. The peak in December 2020 may possibly be related to increased efforts by both the Commission and organized groups to engage the public in the redistricting process.

Figure 1

Number of Comments with References to Partisanship & Competitive Districts Over Time



### Prevalence of Themes by Category

This section provides a summary of the number of references to the five categories of codes and the most common codes within each. Note that the ‘Other’ category is excluded in this analysis as its codes are unrelated.

### Region References

There were about 2,770 total references to Region codes, with commenters most frequently discussing ‘Metro Detroit,’ ‘East Central MI,’ ‘Washtenaw County,’ the ‘Grand Rapids Area,’ and the ‘City of Detroit.’ Each of these codes came up in about 5% to 11% of comments. Testimonies were assigned a Region code only if the commenter was addressing an issue pertinent to the region itself, rather than being categorized based on the commenter's geographical residence. While most commenters concentrated on discussing their respective regions, many others discussed regions that were outside their own. Additionally, although most constituents focused on one region per testimony, a few referenced several within one comment. For example, one constituent wrote, “Please consider giving opportunities for citizens to express their concerns on fair apportionment to areas based on population not geography, in particular Kalamazoo/Battle Creek area, Pontiac area and Saginaw/Bay City area” (Email, 3/10/21).

### COI References

The comments showed about 2,230 references to COI codes, with the most common being the ‘African American/Black Community,’ ‘Other Economic Communities’ (e.g., auto companies, tourism), ‘Schools and School Conferences’ (both Pre-K–12 and colleges/universities), ‘Shared Publicly Funded Resources’ (e.g., water, electricity, police), and the ‘Rural Community.’ Each of these codes came up in about 3% to 5% of testimonies. Although commenters typically focused on one COI, some referenced several within one testimony. An analysis of which COIs most often came up together showed that ‘Schools and School Conferences’ and ‘Shared Publicly Funded Resources’ came up together in 70 comments and ‘Schools and School Conferences’ and ‘Other Economic Communities’ came up together in 57 comments. Commenters also varied in their definitions of their COI(s), with some referring to their ethnic communities and others to their geographical jurisdiction. For example, one commenter stated, “I’m speaking today to advocate for the cities of Midland, Bay City, and Saginaw being recognized as a community of interest” (Mount Pleasant Meeting, 9/23/21).

### Process References

There were about 4,200 total references to Process codes. The most common codes relating to the redistricting process were ‘Request for Meetings/Continue Process’ (requests for additional map revisions and for hosting more public meetings), ‘Con-Staff’ (“con” as opposed to “pro”), ‘Accessibility’ (e.g., geographic, technological), ‘Hiring Staff’ (e.g., executive directors, general counsel) and ‘Technology/Portal.’ Each of these codes came up in about 12% to 18% of comments, most of which reflect testimonies sent via mass emails (see Appendix C for a full list). Notably, many of the mass emails demonstrated controversy over the potential hire of attorney James Lancaster; one stated, “It is widely known that Mr. Lancaster is a partisan attorney.... I encourage the Commission to select a different individual who can serve in a more

non-partisan and natural manner” (Mass Emails, 12/20–1/21). Lancaster was not hired by the Commission. Additionally, in many of these testimonies, constituents requested more meetings in more accessible times and ways, including requests for “night and weekend accessibility,” “services for non-English speakers,” and a population-based meeting schedule (Mass Emails, 3/21).

### **Map References**

The testimonies showed 6,580 total references to Map codes, making it the most frequently referenced category. The most common code, by far, relating to maps was ‘Partisan Fairness & Competitive Districts.’ This was followed by ‘Suggested Change for a Draft Map,’ ‘Pro Draft Map,’ ‘Prioritize keeping COI whole,’ and ‘Con Draft Map,’ each of which came up in about 9% to 12% of comments. There was variation among commenters regarding whether they offered general comments about maps or referenced a specific draft map. Additionally, even when commenters were in favor of a particular map, they still believed it could be improved and wanted the commissioners to continue the process. For example, in reference to two specific draft maps (named for Michigan trees), one commenter stated, “I believe Cherry is your best Senate seat map and Pine is your best House map. But neither are good enough yet” (Lansing Meeting, 10/21).

### **Prevalence of Themes by Region**

This section provides a summary of all comments that referenced a particular region. ‘Partisan Fairness & Competitive Districts’ was the most common code across almost all comments that referenced a region, suggesting that partisanship was an issue for commenters in all regions of the state. Figure 2 displays the top two most common codes among comments that discussed a particular region. For example, there were 625 total comments that referenced Metro Detroit, 37% of which also referenced the ‘Partisan Fairness and Competitive Districts’ code, and 25% of which referenced the ‘Suggested Change For a Draft Map’ code.

Figure 2

Most Commonly Discussed Codes (Themes) by Region

Region	Most Common Code	Second Most Common Code
Metro Detroit (625 comments)	Partisan Fairness & Competitive Districts (37%)	Suggested Change for a Draft Map (25%)
East Central MI (431 comments)	Partisan Fairness & Competitive Districts (34%)	Prioritize keeping Jurisdictions whole (26%)
Washtenaw County (349 comments)	Partisan Fairness & Competitive Districts (36%)	Pro Draft Map (26%)
Grand Rapids area (284 comments)	Partisan Fairness & Competitive Districts (43%)	Suggested Change for a Draft Map (39%)
City of Detroit (283 comments)	Partisan Fairness & Competitive Districts (38%)	African American/Black Community (30%)
Southwest MI (223 comments)	Suggested Change for a Draft Map (29%)	Partisan Fairness & Competitive Districts (29%)
Lansing area (195 comments)	Partisan Fairness & Competitive Districts (49%)	Suggested Change for a Draft Map (26%)
Western MI/Lakeshore (187 comments)	Prioritize keeping COI whole (34%)	Other economic communities (28%)
Dearborn/ Dearborn Heights (62 comments)	MENA (Middle Eastern North African) (62%)	Prioritize keeping COI whole (32%)
Thumb (57 comments)	Partisan Fairness & Competitive Districts (35%)	Suggested Change for a Draft Map (28%)
Northwest Michigan (33 comments)	Publicly Submitted Map Preference (45%)	Con Draft Map (39%)
Upper Peninsula (28 comments)	Suggested Change for a Draft Map (32%)	Native Americans/Indigenous Community (21%)
Northern Michigan (13 comments)	Partisan Fairness & Competitive Districts (46%)	East Central MI (23%)

## Regions Disproportionately Represented in Constituent Comments

An analysis of comments that referenced a particular region(s) showed that some regions were overrepresented while others were underrepresented compared to the regional population breakdowns of the state. This could be attributed to various factors: citizens in particular areas being more (or less) concerned about their electoral maps, the Commission having more (or fewer) meetings and outreach in some regions relative to others, accessibility issues in certain regions, etc.

Figure 3 displays the proportionality of comments that reference a particular region compared to its state population share. Specifically, the blue bars show the percentage of the total population of the state that resides in a given region, while the red bars show the percentage of all regionally focused references that mention each region in particular. For example, the figure shows that the East Central MI region is overrepresented, with 16% of all regionally focused comments mentioning the region despite only 10% of the state's population living there. By comparison, the Northern Michigan and the Upper Peninsula regions appear to be underrepresented, with fewer comments mentioning these areas compared with their portions of the state population. This is also true of the East Michigan and Detroit Metro regions. Note that these region names are based on 'Michigan's Prosperity Regions,' shown in figure 4.<sup>2</sup> The codebook is largely based on these regions with slight variations (for example, the inclusion of Genesee County in the East Central MI region), all of which have been accounted for in this analysis.

Figure 3

### Regional Representation Relative to State Population Distribution

<sup>2</sup> Opportunity Zone Prosperity Region Maps - mshda. (n.d.). State of Michigan. Retrieved April 14, 2024, from <https://www.michigan.gov/mshda/developers/opportunity-zones/opportunity-zone-prosperity-region-maps>

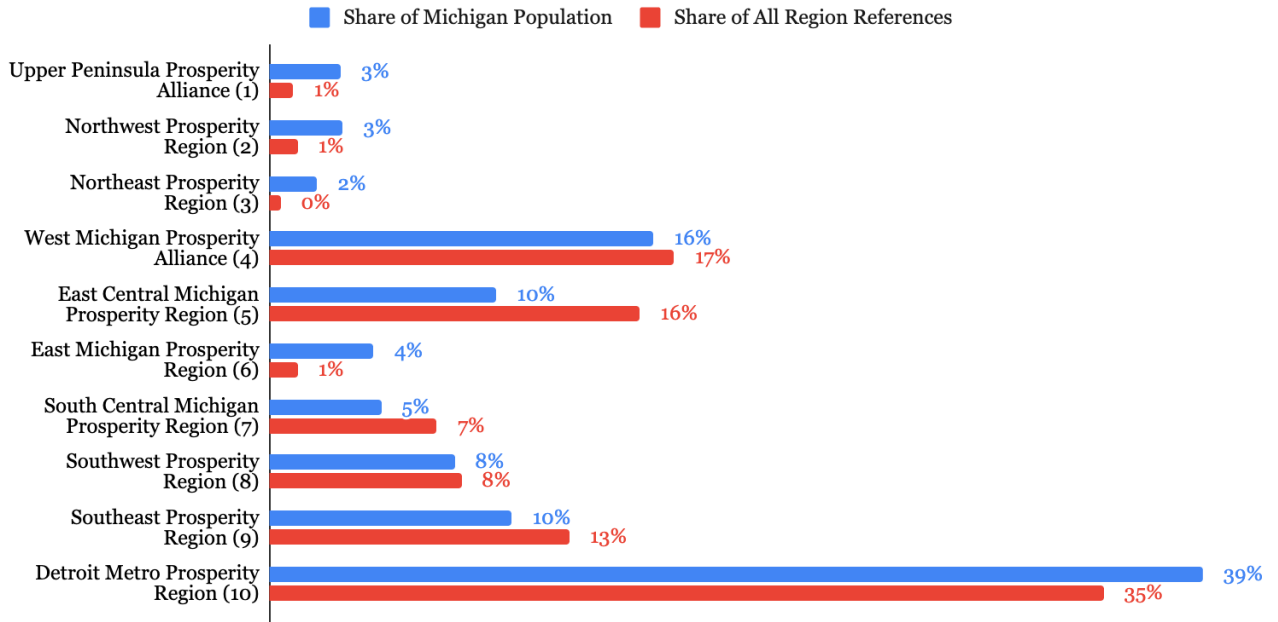
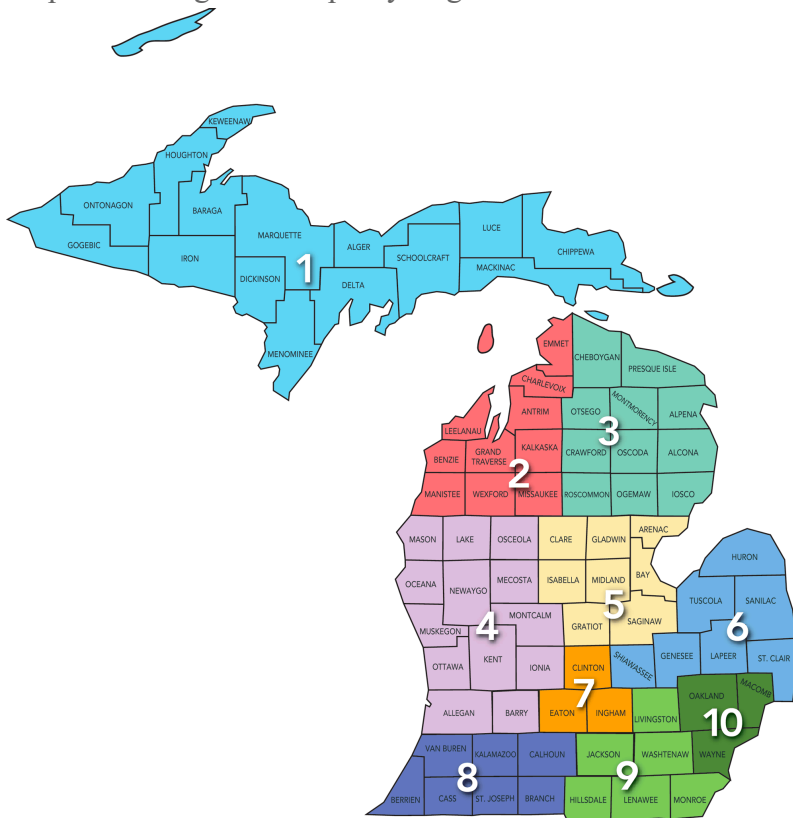


Figure 4  
Map of 'Michigan's Prosperity Regions'



## Most Common Code Pairs: Process and Maps Codes

This section provides an overview of the most common code pairs, that is, the frequency with which two codes appeared together within a single comment. Notably, most of the code pairs referred to codes in the Process and Maps categories. The frequency of these code pairs was largely influenced by their appearance in mass emails, including those about the potential hire of attorney James Lancaster and requests for improved accessibility. Figure 3 displays the top 15 code pairs. For example, the codes ‘Request for Meetings/Continue Process’ and ‘Accessibility’ came up together in 571 constituent testimonies, making up over 10% of all comments.

Figure 4

Most Common Code Pairs

Code 1	Code 2	Count	Percent
Request for Meetings/Continue Process	Accessibility	571	10.34%
Hiring Staff	Con-Staff	541	9.80%
Con-Staff	Partisan Fairness & Competitive Districts	515	9.33%
Hiring Staff	Partisan Fairness & Competitive Districts	495	8.97%
Technology/Portal	Accessibility	490	8.88%
Technology/Portal	Request for Meetings/Continue Process	466	8.44%
Pro Draft Map	Partisan Fairness & Competitive Districts	349	6.32%
Con Draft Map	Partisan Fairness & Competitive Districts	280	5.07%
Request for Meetings/Continue Proces	Partisan Fairness & Competitive Districts	245	4.44%
Metro Detroit	Partisan Fairness & Competitive Districts	229	4.15%
Publicly Submitted Map Preference	Partisan Fairness & Competitive Districts	224	4.06%
Partisan Fairness & Competitive Districts	Suggested Change for a Draft Map	214	3.88%
Pro Draft Map	Con Draft Map	196	3.55%
Partisan Fairness & Competitive Districts	Voting Rights Act issues	172	3.12%

## Other Findings and Final Recommendations

- There was significant disagreement among commenters regarding whether partisan fairness or preserving COIs should be prioritized over the other.
- There were a few repeat commenters who spoke at multiple meetings across the state, one of whom spoke over 130 times.
- One point for consideration is whether mass emails have the same effect as unique individual comments from constituents and whether they should be weighed the same or differently in analysis by the Commission.
- The Commission should note that constituents pay strong attention to their staff hires and, more specifically, the perceived partisanship of hires.



- . Based on the concerns of some commenters, the next Commission may need to consider doing more outreach to rural communities. For example, one constituent stated, “I am requesting that more town halls be held in rural communities. I'm also requesting that every town hall meeting be livestreamed so that all citizens of Michigan have access to them” (virtual meeting, 4/5/21). It may be helpful to create an urban/rural census designation in the dataset to allow for quantitative analysis that will determine whether further outreach is needed, although the underrepresentation of Northern Michigan suggests that this was the case.

# Appendices

## Appendix A

### Annotated Codebook

#### Category Codes

- 01 Region
- 02 COIs
- 03 Process
- 04 Maps
- 05 Other

#### **01 Region**

- 101 City of Detroit
- 102 Metro Detroit
  - Oakland County
  - Wayne County
  - Macomb
  - Taylor
- 103 Lansing area
  - Ingham County
- 104 Grand Rapids area
  - Kent County
- 105 East Central MI
  - Flint
  - Midland
  - Saginaw
  - Tri-Cities
- 106 Upper Peninsula
  - Marquette
- 107 Western MI/Lakeshore
  - Muskegon
  - Berrien County
  - Ottawa County
- 108 Washtenaw County
  - Jackson
  - Ann Arbor
  - Ypsilanti
- 109 Southwest MI
  - Kalamazoo
- 110 Northwest Michigan
  - Traverse City
- 111 Thumb
  - Port Huron
  - Kingston

- 112 Northern Michigan
  - South of UP, usually rural
- 113 Dearborn/ Dearborn Heights
- 199 City, County, Municipality Other than Listed

## **02 COI**

- 201 MENA (Middle Eastern North African)
  - Also Muslim community
  - Mention of ACCESS
- 202 African American/Black Community
- 203 Native Americans/Indigenous Community
- 204 Bengali
- 205 Hispanic/Latino
- 206 AAPI (Asian American Pacific Islander)
- 207 Unions
  - UAW (United Auto Workers)
- 208 Watershed
- 209 Farming/agriculture
- 210 Religious Community
- 211 Schools and School Conferences
  - Includes universities
- 212 Shared Publicly Funded Resources
  - Utilities like Water & Electric
  - Community Centers
  - Fire & Police Departments
  - Hospitals
- 213 Other economic communities
  - Auto companies (not to be confused with unions)
  - Tourism
- 214 Minority Community- Unspecified
- 215 Neighborhoods
- 216 LBGTQI+ Community
- 217 Rural Community
- 218 Urban Community
- 299 Other COI

## **03 Process**

- 301 Hiring Staff
- 302 Hearing Conduct
- 303 Technology/Portal
- 304 Request for Meetings/Continue Process
- 305 Budget/Salaries
- 306 Accessibility
- 307 Pro-Staff
  - Use also for pro staff hiring
  - DON'T use for comments that simply say "The commission is doing a great job."

- 308 Con-Staff
  - Use also for con staff hiring
- 309 Legality of process
  - Concern with constitutionality of law
- 310 Ensure Fair Map Voting procedure
  - In reference to when **commissioners** were voting on maps
- 399 Other process comments

#### **04 Maps**

- 401 Pro Draft Map
  - i.e. “I like Linden, Cherry, Pine”
- 402 Con Draft Map
- 403 Publicly Submitted Map Preference
  - Typically start with a P, W, or C followed by numbers (i.e P3876)
  - AFLCIO map2
  - Promote the Vote map
- 404 Partisan Fairness & Competitive Districts
  - “Packing” and “cracking” comments
- 405 Compactness
- 406 Concern that Maps Split up a jurisdiction
  - i.e, respect County, City, and Township Boundaries
- 407 Concern that Maps Split Up a (non-jurisdiction) COI
- 408 Suggested Change for a Draft Map
- 409 Voting Rights Act issues
  - VRA
- 410 Prioritize keeping COI whole
- 411 Prioritize keeping Jurisdictions whole
  
- 499 Other comments on maps

#### **05 Other**

- 501 Prison Gerrymandering
- 502 Name & Address Requirement for Public Comment
- 503 Secret Memos/Private Meeting Concern
- 504 Commissioner Political Affiliation
- 599 Other unspecified (i.e., grab bag)
  
- 999** Other: Flag for review

## Appendix B

### Methodological Report

#### Methodological Report: Michigan Independent Citizen Redistricting Commission's (MICRC) Public Comment Project

Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy (CLOSUP) at the University of Michigan  
Sofia Terenzio; edited by CLOSUP staff  
May 2023

### Background

In 2018, Proposal 18-2 passed by popular vote to amend the Michigan Constitution to establish the Michigan Independent Citizen Redistricting Commission (MICRC).<sup>3</sup> The MICRC, which replaces the state's prior approach to redistricting by the state legislature, is composed of 13 registered voters from varying political affiliations randomly selected through an application process.<sup>4</sup> In ten years the Commission will reconvene with new, randomly-selected members to redraw the maps.<sup>5</sup> The inaugural Commission held over 100 open meetings across the state and online to allow citizens to make public comments and mapping suggestions in person and virtually.<sup>6</sup>

The Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy (CLOSUP) at the University of Michigan's Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy undertook a project in 2021 to organize and analyze the public comments provided in these open meetings and online.

### The CLOSUP MICRC Public Comment Database

The original purpose of this project was to build a database of thousands of public comments from MICRC meetings so that they could be collected and analyzed for future Commissions. CLOSUP assembled a team of U-M student research assistants (RAs) to begin data entry in October of 2021, and the team completed their initial round of data collection and coding in the Summer of 2023.

### Building the Database

To build the public comment database, the research team collected transcripts from the public meetings from the MICRC "Meeting Notices and Materials Archives" webpage (found [here](#)).

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<sup>3</sup> *Ballot proposal 2 of 2018 - Michigan House of Representatives*. House Fiscal Agency. (2018). [https://www.house.mi.gov/hfa/PDF/Alpha/Ballot\\_Proposal\\_2018-2\\_VNP\\_Redistricting.pdf](https://www.house.mi.gov/hfa/PDF/Alpha/Ballot_Proposal_2018-2_VNP_Redistricting.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> *Frequently Asked Questions*. Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission. (n.d.). <https://www.michigan.gov/micrc/about/faq>

<sup>5</sup> See note 2.

<sup>6</sup> *Meeting Notices and Materials Archives*. Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission. (n.d.), from <https://www.michigan.gov/micrc/meeting-notices-and-materials-archives>

The transcripts contained both spoken and written public comments. Seven research assistants read the transcripts and copied and pasted individual public comments into spreadsheets. RAs also recorded specific characteristics of each comment such as the meeting date, the commenter's name, the hometown of the commenter, and whether the commenter spoke on behalf of a group, as well as a few other attributes into the spreadsheet. The issue of how to enter attachments (i.e., images or drawings of maps, handwritten notes, etc.) arose at this step in the process. The team decided not to include attachments in the database at this stage. When a written comment included a document that could not be copied (such as a map), RAs would mark that the comment included an attachment in the "Attachment(s)?" column.

Once the team processed almost all the MICRC meetings, one RA compiled the individual spreadsheets into a single, shared spreadsheet and cleaned the data to maintain formatting across all entries. This compiled spreadsheet is the public comment database (found here: [Master Public Comment Database](#)). The database has over 5,500 recorded public comments. Thirteen meetings are missing from the database (found here: [Appendix to the Master Database](#)). Some of these meetings did not have transcripts posted on the MICRC website and could not be processed into the database.

### **Creating the Codebook**

Two RAs familiar with the MICRC process and public comments brainstormed approaches for analysis of the public comment data and took the lead on the project. CLOSUP's Senior Program Manager Debra Horner and Executive Director Tom Ivacko oversaw their work. Using the RAs' background knowledge of the comments, they brainstormed category codes for the codebook. In an initial tagging process, they randomly selected 50 comments from the database and developed new codes for comments as they came up. Once this first iteration of the codebook was completed, they tagged and coded another 50 of the same comments and then compared how each comment was coded in a double-blinded coding process. From the discrepancies that arose during their comparison, they adjusted the codebook by creating new codes, enhancing definitions of codes, and providing examples for ambiguous codes. The RAs decided to use the category codes of "Region", "COIs" (Communities of Interest), "Process", "Maps", and "Other".

### **Coding Process**

Five additional RAs were brought on the team to code comments. RAs took UM-sponsored training in responsible research practices, were taught the qualitative coding process, and learned the codebook in a series of informational meetings led by the co-leading RAs. To ensure consistency and quality in coding, the team was split into two groups to practice coding. Each RA coded 100 comments individually, then met with their group to discuss and justify the codes they chose for each response. The senior RAs co-led the team and helped facilitate the learning and reviewing process. RAs continued to revise the codebook as new themes came up across comments.

Next, RAs broke off individually to continue coding responses. Co-leading RAs reviewed comments flagged by other RAs to help decide how to code unclear comments. After RAs completed coding 200 responses each, the team met again to finalize the codebook. RAs

collaborated to develop final additions and edits to the codebook. Due to this iterative process, the first 1,400 responses in the database were coded before the codebook was finalized and do not include 12 codes added later (added codes found here: [Coding Process Documentation](#)). [Note: after completion of this Methodological Report, the first 1,400 responses were reviewed again and further coded with the full list of potential codes.]

The final codebook consists of five category codes and 62 codes (found here: [Annotated Codebook](#)). In addition to the codebook, the team flagged mass emails submitted to the MICRC as public comments. The team recorded each mass email and how it was coded in a separate document (found here: [MICRC Public Comment Mass Emails & How to Code](#)).

## Qualitative Analysis

### Example:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1nOnxsPjYTrpngB0kbYTIWWfspikuzFs6UMsyQ4g3M0s/edit>

### Outline:

#### 1. Creation of the public comment database

- a. 7 RAs and one leading RA (Natalie) compiled a database of all the spoken and written public comment from MICRC meetings
- b. We found the comments linked on the MICRC "Meeting Notices and Materials Page" webpage
- c. Database is composed of 15 columns: link to transcript, date of testimony, location of hearing, Regular Mtg/Committee Mtg/Public Hearing, First name, Last name, City/County of residence (if given), Representing an organization? (Individual/group/unclear), Organization/Group name (if applicable), First or Second round of comment, In-person or Virtual/remote, Method of Submission (At meeting, SurveyMonkey, Email), Testimony, Notes, Attachment(s)?
- d. [Data Entry process](#): RAs would read the comment and fill in the columns
- e. Issue encountered at this stage– how to enter “attachments” (i.e. images from email public comments)
- f. After all comments were read and cols were filled out, Sofia created a single google sheet [Master Public Comment Database](#) with all comments from almost all meetings, noting the missing meetings here: [Appendix to the Master Database](#) (13 meetings missing)
  - i. Sofia cleaned it up, made it consistent

#### 2. RAs Mustafa and Sofia brainstormed initial codes for a qualitative analysis

- [MICRC Codebook Brainstorm](#)
- Initial tagging process: randomly selected 100 comments from the Master database
  - Sofia coded 50, creating new tags as they arose and adding them to the brainstorm doc
  - Mustafa coded 50, creating new tags as they arose brainstorm doc

- Once the first iteration of a codebook was created, Mustafa and Sofia took a new selection of 50 random comments each: [Double-Blind Coding- MustafaDouble-Blind Coding- Sofia](#)
- Once completed Sofia and Mustafa conducted a comparison of the 50 comments they had individually coded [Blind Coding Comparison](#)
  - From the discrepancies that arose, they adjusted the codebook by creating new codes and bulking out definitions and examples for other codes [Annotated Codebook](#)
  - The codebook consists of the category codes of
    - 01 Region
    - 02 COIs
    - 03 Process
    - 04 Maps
    - 05 Other

### 3. Team Coding Calibration

- A team of 5 RAs lead by Sofia and Mustafa was created to begin the coding process
- Coders were taught the qualitative coding process [Doing a Thematic Analysis.pdf](#) and given the [Annotated Codebook](#) to review and familiarize themselves with
- Coders were split into two groups– Group 1 members coded the first (chronological) 100 comments individually and Group 2 members coded 101-200
- Next, Group 1 met and Group 2 met to go over and justify the codes
  - Each group compared codes with one another and explained why they put each code if there was a discrepancy
  - This was another opportunity to update the codebook ([Annotated Codebook](#)) as coders came up with new codes to add to the codebook
  - Creating and adapting the codebook was a collaboraitive effort– while Mustafa and Sofia came up with category codes, coders helped develop many new codes
  - All codes ending in 99 are holding places for responses that didnt fit a specific code but fit under a category

### 4. Coders began coding

- Each coder was assigned 200 codes (in chronological order) to begin coding
- After everyone had completed their first 200 codes, the team met to discuss any additions or complications with the codebook
- At this point, we finalized the codebook
  - We developed 12 new codes between the coding calibration period and the first 1,400 comments coded
  - Therefore, the first 1,400 comments do not include the 12 codes found here: [Coding Process Documentation](#)

### 5. Coding continued

- The group began coding in a master document: [MICRC Full Coding](#)
- Sofia would assign each coder 200 comments at a time



- The codes included a column labeled “FLAG for Sofia and Mustafa”-- Coders could flag ambiguous comments here to ask for a second pair of eyes on the comment and to get feedback
- In the Notes column, coders could explain why they marked a comment with a code ending in -99
- The team created a doc for mass emails and how mass emails should be coded to ensure consistency: [MICRC Public Comment Mass Emails & How to Code](#)

## Appendix C

### List of Mass Emails from MICRC Written Public Comments

#### **Mass Email 1:**

“Subject: Please ensure an accessible redistricting process; Independent Redistricting Commission, Thank you for the work you are doing to ensure that every Michigander can vote in representative districts in the next decade. This is hard work and I appreciate your dedication. I am writing this letter upon becoming aware of your resolution to alter the redistricting deadlines due to the delay in the 2020 Census Data that may not arrive until as late as September 30, 2021. This is an opportunity for the Commission to have a greater focus on community engagement in the spring and summer leading up to the Census Data release. As a Michigan resident, it is my desire that the commission adopt this emphasis on public engagement in its modified schedule. Michigan residents such as I deserve the opportunity to have our voices heard in this process that will determine the foundation of our representation in government. As you consider the necessary deadline changes, please maintain the originally planned number of public hearing sessions as well as you adopt these recommendations to the proposed meeting schedule: · Population based meeting schedule: Over half a million Michigan residents live in Calhoun, Kalamazoo, and Saginaw County. Each of those locations, as well as other large population centers in Michigan, should have more opportunities to speak and add their many diverse voices to the process. Additional meeting dates in these locations would give those residents the appropriate opportunity to contribute to this process. · Remote testimony: Allow live public testimony at every public hearing via Zoom or other remote video conferencing tool. · Night & Weekend accessibility: If two hearings are held in a city, the commission should strongly consider hosting at least one of them in the evening (between 4-8 PM) and/or on the weekend to accommodate residents with daytime responsibilities. · Services for non-english speakers: Translate meeting materials and content into multiple languages, particularly in communities such as Dearborn, Muskegon, Grand Rapids, Detroit and Warren with a substantial number of non-English speaking residents. Thank you again for all the hard work you are doing to pull off this monumental task in enhancing our democracy. I look forward to engaging with you in the future.”

- Code: 306, 304, 303

#### **Mass Email 2:**

“Subject: Request for More Meetings; To the Michigan Redistricting Commission From: Bob Livingston Date: 03/09/21 Thank you for this opportunity to respond to the initial formation of the Redistricting Committee and the decennial redistricting of the state. I urge you to schedule meetings also in mid-size communities that are often overlooked when soliciting feedback. These include but aren’t limited to the Kalamazoo and Battle Creek metro area, Pontiac, and the Saginaw and Bay City metro region. Thanks for giving attention to this request.”

- Code: 306, 304, 109, 102, 105

- Notes: subject line may differ, but the content stays about the same

**Mass Email 3:**

"Subject: Comments on the proposed meeting locations; I am writing to request that a redistricting informational meeting be held in Livingston County so that the citizens in the county can voice questions and concerns to the committee regarding the process. Thank you"

- **Code: 304, 103**

**Mass Email 4:**

"Subject: Protect the independence of Michigan's Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission Dear Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission, In 2018, the people of Michigan voted for an Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission to ensure a fair redistricting process. I believe that independence will be severely undermined if the commission moves forward with hiring the law firm BakerHostetler. This firm has a history of defending extreme partisan gerrymanders. We need to protect the independence of our state's commission and redistricting process, and that absolutely can't happen if the MICRC hires BakerHostetler for litigation counsel services. I'm urging Michigan's Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission to protect the independence of our commission by hiring an independent, nonpartisan law firm instead. Michigan voters asked for an independent commission to protect our maps and we won that battle back in 2018. Now it's imperative that we do everything in our power to safeguard that independence. I hope the commission takes these steps to ensure the people that the redistricting process is fair. Thank you. Sincerely,"

- **Code: 404, 301, 308**

**Mass Email 5:**

"Subject: Protect the independence of Michigan's Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission Dear Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission, In 2018, the people of Michigan voted for an Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission to ensure a fair redistricting process. I believe that independence will be severely undermined if the commission moves forward with hiring the law firm BakerHostetler. This firm has a history of defending extreme partisan gerrymanders. We need to protect the independence of our state's commission and redistricting process, and that absolutely can't happen if the MICRC hires BakerHostetler for litigation counsel services. I'm urging Michigan's Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission to protect the independence of our commission by hiring an independent, nonpartisan law firm instead. Michigan voters asked for an independent commission to protect our maps and we won that battle back in 2018. Now it's imperative that we do everything in our power to safeguard that independence. I hope the commission takes these steps to ensure the people that the redistricting process is fair. Thank you. Sincerely,"

- **Code: 301, 308, 404**

**Mass Email 7:**

“Subject: Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission Public Comment Dear Commissioners: Michigan voters overwhelmingly supported the creation of a non-partisan redistricting commission in order to ensure that every vote matters and that our political districts fairly represent the will of the voters. In your final maps, I strongly urge you to fully consider partisan fairness measures. The goal ought to be to create maps with as close to zero wasted votes as possible. Fair, non-partisan redistricting means that if one party gets 60% of the votes in a statewide election, they should get 60% of the seats in Congress and the state legislature. While communities of interest are important to consider, they should not be considered at the expense of an undue amount of wasted votes. The goal is one person, one vote - wasted votes do not benefit any community or our state as a whole. Sincerely,”

- **Code: 401**

**Mass Email 8:**

“ Subject: Please Reject Mr. Lancaster From Further Consideration; Dear Redistricting Commissioners, I am writing to you to request that the Michigan Redistricting Commissioner members deny any further consideration for the General Counsel position the current candidate under consideration, James Lancaster. It is widely known that Mr. Lancaster is a partisan attorney. Under Proposal I passed in 2018, the residents of Michigan made their voices clear that redistricting was to be done in a non-partisan manner away from partisan politics. There is no doubt that Mr. Lancaster cannot provide unbiased recommendations regarding the Commission’s legal matters. Looking through Mr. Lancaster’s political contributions, it is clear that he strongly favors Democratic candidates and liberal activist organizations. Again, the Independent Redistricting Commission has a mission that is based around the fundamental belief that they are to act as a non-partisan entity. Having the Commission’s General Counsel be a clear partisan individual will undermine the Commission’s integrity. Mr. Lancaster also has a clear conflict of interest as he served as one of the main legal attorneys for the political organization that drafted and supported Proposal I's passage in 2018. This creates a situation where the individual who drafted the language would now have to give neutral legal advice on the language he helped write. I encourage the Commission to select a different individual who can serve in a more non-partisan and natural manner. Thank you for your time and consideration. Sincerely,”

- **Code: 301, 308, 404**

**Mass Email 9:**

Subject: Michigan Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission Public Comment Dear Commissioners: Michigan voters overwhelmingly supported the creation of a non-partisan redistricting commission in order to ensure that every vote matters and that our political districts fairly represent the will of the voters. In your final maps, I strongly urge you to fully consider partisan fairness measures. The goal ought to be to create maps with as close to zero wasted

votes as possible. Fair, non-partisan redistricting means that if one party gets 60% of the votes in a statewide election, they should get 60% of the seats in Congress and the state legislature. While communities of interest are important to consider, they should not be considered at the expense of an undue amount of wasted votes. The goal is one person, one vote - wasted votes do not benefit any community or our state as a whole. Sincerely, Sincerely, Steven Yankoviak  
Kalamazoo, MI 49006

- **Code: 404**

**Mass public comment 10:**

I'm a tribal member of the Navajo nation. While you do your good work, we ask you to recognize the indigenous people of Michigan as a community of interest. Per the C.D.C. There are approximately 80,000 tribal peoples in our state. This is a gross under count as it does not include those who have been disenfranchised due to the broken treaties and forced assimilation practices this map includes Indian health service run by the Huron band of Potawatomi, the health and human services holds responsibilities providing and coordinating access to quality cultural based and social service to promote the wellbeing for federally recognized American Indian Alaskan natives and descendants living in the Grand Rapids area. This map holds our values and is much more fair and equitable than the one the MICRC has proposed and I ask that it be used instead.

- **Code: 203, 212, 403, 404, 104**
- Note: The location code may differ depending on which MI area the commenter includes, but the comment is otherwise the same.