

March 24, 2025

Brenda Fry
4926 Sweetbitch Dr.
Riverside, OH 45424

Dear Chairwoman Roegner, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Blackshear, and members of the General Government Committee,

My name is Brenda Fry and I am a sitting member of the city council in Riverside, Ohio. I am writing today to oppose the passage of Senate Bill 63.

I represent a community of 25,000, a first ring suburb of the city of Dayton. It is communities such as ours that will be most impacted by your decision here on Senate Bill 63.

Our charter stipulates that our council members are elected from the municipality “at large”. This is beneficial to our community because the decisions we make as a council are weighed against the benefit to community as a whole rather than an individual ward.

One of the features of having this style of representation is that we oftentimes have races where many more candidates are running than there are open seats. When I was first elected in 2017, there were 7 candidates running for 4 open seats. Having many candidates to choose from is good for the voter, as they have a true diversity of choice. Unfortunately, the default plurality voting system fails these voters in a couple of ways.

When voters must choose from among several strong candidates without a runoff election or an opportunity to rank their votes, the result is that the votes for candidates with very popular, no-nonsense platforms are split. This effectively diminishes the perceived popularity of the platform. This gives the advantage to the most extreme candidates – candidates who may not have the best interest in the city at heart.

When voters are given the opportunity to rank the candidates for an instant runoff, the voters get the opportunity to consolidate their support around the strongest and most popular candidates. This results in the candidate with the broadest appeal emerging as the winner. This process allows a natural consensus to emerge from competing voting blocs. In turn, this consensus provides a clear direction to council moving forward.

One of the strongest ways that citizens communicate collectively to their local government is through elections. We may not have the luxury of weekly opinion polls to tell us what voters think about the latest road project or budget decision, but we do get to see the priorities of our constituents in election results. The quality of this data is diminished when there is vote-splitting. A ranked vote can offer a rich dataset, showing

the true preferences of the voters. This is important because good data leads to good decisions. Good decisions at the local level lead to a stronger local economy and ultimately, a stronger Ohio.

Senate Bill 63 is an unnecessary handicap on Ohio voters, and I urge you to consider the impact to all Ohio communities.

Sincerely,
Brenda Fry