Senators:

I am opposed to the SJR 5 proposal submitted by Senator Huffman re: his plan for redistricting reform. This is a complex issue which requires a clear understanding of its content and more time is needed to study his proposal. With a vote likely to take place so soon after it was presented, inadequate time is allowed. His last minute contribution seems designed more to obstruct passage of competing plans than to actually limit gerrymandering in Ohio.

Fair Districts has a plan for reform that is well-designed and addresses the issue of reform far better than the SJR 5 proposal. It is supported by many highly-regarded non-partisan agencies such as the League of Women Voters and as of 12/31/17 more than 188,000 Ohio voters have signed petitions supporting their proposal to place it on the November, 2018 ballot.

Initial feedback from a redistricting reform specialist in Ohio says that SJR 5 is less effective than that presented by Fair Districts for the following reasons:

1. The SJR 5 proposal doesn’t include language that prohibits drawing districts to benefit a particular party or candidate
2. If the party has a supermajority, SJR 5 allows a map to be drawn without any input from the minority. It could then be passed with only one-third of the minority party’s vote.
3. Large counties under SJR 5 could continue to be split three or four times to craft more advantageous districts for the party drawing the maps.
4. With SJR 5, voters could not mount a referendum to challenge a map approved by the General Assembly, as they can now.

If Senator Huffman truly wishes to initiate Redistricting reform and end gerrymandering in Ohio, let him instead submit the Fair Districts plan as it is now written. Doing this will demonstrate that he represents the people of Ohio rather than the party he represents.

Sincerely,

David Tisdale