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Vice Chair Transportation Committee

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**House of
Representatives
State of Tennessee**

NASHVILLE

COMMITTEES:
TRANSPORTATION
INFRASTRUCTURE
JUDICIARY
CONSTITUTIONAL PROTECTIONS &
SENTENCING

DISTRICT ADDRESS:

140 PAUL DRIVE
PARIS, TN 38242

August 14, 2019

Dear Chairman Fogerty and Task Force Members,

I am a member of the Tennessee House Judiciary Committee. I have been a practicing attorney for 29 years. I served as an Assistant District Attorney for the 24th Judicial District, and I continue to practice as a trial attorney in the 24th Judicial District. I appeared before the Task Force on July 29, 2019 at your meeting at the Administrative Office of the Courts in Nashville to vocalize strong opposition to moving Henry County from the 24th Judicial District to the 27th Judicial District, and I write this letter to memorialize in writing the opposition I orally raised at the meeting. I also plan to be in attendance at your upcoming meeting on August 19 to continue providing a voice of opposition to redistricting Henry County.

As a practicing attorney in the 24th Judicial District who was born and raised in Henry County, on a personal and professional level, I am fundamentally against removing Henry County from the 24th Judicial District. Additionally, as an elected representative and voice for over 32,000 Henry County residents in my state house district, I strenuously oppose removing Henry County from the 24th Judicial District in my official capacity as a state legislator. The members of the Henry County Bar Association unanimously voted to oppose the proposed redistricting, and the Henry County Bar Association submitted a letter to this Task Force on March 26, 2019 opposing redistricting. On March 18, 2019, the Henry County Board of Commissioners passed a Resolution opposing redistricting. I and my constituents are vehemently opposed to any redistricting that would involve removing Henry County from the 24th Judicial District and placing it in the 27th Judicial District with Weakley and Obion Counties.

Based upon the Report of the Tennessee Trial Judge Association's Judicial Resource Study Committee, moving Henry County to the 27th Judicial District would result in the loss of a judge for the region. The 24th and 27th Judicial Districts comprised of 7 counties are currently served by 5 judges. The proposed change would result in the loss of a judicial position, and the number of judges serving these 7 counties would be reduced from 5 to 4. Fewer judges necessarily equates to less access to justice, which is a detriment to the population served.

Indeed, moving Henry County from the 24th to the 27th Judicial District without allocation of an additional judge would result in the newly configured 27th Judicial District having the largest ratio of judge to population size in all of West Tennessee. Specifically, it would be 1 judge for approximately 50,000 people. This outnumbers any other judicial district in West Tennessee by over 7,000 people per judge. It would also mean that the 2 judges currently serving the 27th Judicial District would experience their workload increase by 50%. This necessarily means reduced access to justice by the constituents of Henry, Obion and Weakley Counties.

To be frank, I have spoken with a number of individuals concerning the redistricting proposal and have yet to encounter a single individual in Henry, Obion or Weakley County who was not opposed to it. The individuals who will be affected the most by the redistricting proposal don't perceive any problem necessitating redistricting. In the words of Judge Angel, "If it isn't broke, don't fix it." Indeed, I am unaware of any benefit that can result from it; however, I keenly appreciate the myriad of problems that judicial redistricting will cause including, but not limited to, spreading judicial resources too thin, increasing delays in the legal process, and creating massive disruption dealing with the changes.

As I am sure you are aware, in 2009, a Tennessee Judicial Redistricting Study was conducted by The Justice Management Institute as contracted by the state. Relevant issues were raised in the course of that study as to whether judicial redistricting was feasible, much less desirable. Additionally, there was no clear understanding as to what perceived problems existed that could be remedied by changing the boundary lines of judicial districts. The conclusion reached was that judicial redistricting was unnecessary, and I submit that the same remains true today. The principal problem that has arisen has been a shortage of judges, which the legislature has remedied with the appropriation of additional judicial resources and the creation of additional judicial seats. In short, judicial redistricting as it relates to the 24th and 27th Judicial Districts is unnecessary, undesirable and unfeasible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Bruce J. Griffey".

State Representative Bruce Griffey
House District 75