RESOLUTION TO APPOINT A NON-PARTISAN COMMITTEE TO REDRAW THE HOUSE & SENATE DISTRICTS OF NORTH CAROLINA AND TO END THE PRACTICE OF PARTISAN GERRYMANDERING

WHEREAS, The bipartisan offense of gerrymandering, i.e. redistricting in a manner intended to hinder the efforts of a political party, to favor one political party over another, and/or to aid in the election of certain candidates over other candidates, has existed in the United States since the eighteenth century; and

WHEREAS, Gerrymandering efforts have had a significant impact on the outcome of American elections since the earliest known case in 1788, favoring Democrats at some points in time and favoring Republicans at other points in history; and

WHEREAS, Notable cases of gerrymandering in our country have been proven to be, not only partisan in nature, but also racially and ethnically motivated; and

WHEREAS, Gerrymandered redistricting has also been shown to spawn and promote voter suppression, particularly affecting minority groups, the elderly, university students, and the disabled;

WHEREAS, The Supreme Court ruled in 1986 that acts of partisan gerrymandering directly violated the Equal Protection Clause; and

WHEREAS, The Supreme Court ruled in 1995 that redistricting plans must be "subjected to strict scrutiny" in order to insure that race is never used as the predominant factor when drawing lines; and

WHEREAS, A 2013 analysis conducted by Christopher Ingraham found that North Carolina Democrats were under-represented by as many as eighteen seats in the U. S. House of Representatives after the 2012 election in comparison to their vote share; and

WHEREAS, The aforementioned under-representation was suspected to be largely attributable to partisan gerrymandering; and

WHEREAS, North Carolina tied with Maryland in 2014 for the distinction of being the "most gerrymandered state" in the U.S.; and

WHEREAS, North Carolina's 12th District is said to hold the distinction of being the most gerrymandered district in the country; and

WHEREAS, The Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals in the summer of 2016 ruled that North Carolina districts were drawn with racial bias, having "targeted African Americans with almost surgical precision;" and

WHEREAS, A November 2016 federal court held that districts had been drawn with racial bias and ordered that districts be redrawn for both House and Senate districts and that a special 2017 election be held; and

WHEREAS, Thirty Percent (30%) of NC State Senate Districts and forty-eight percent (48%) of all State House Districts had only one candidate on the ballot in 2016 as a direct result of gerrymandering; and

WHEREAS, The Supreme Court has since put the above special elections on hold, with no clear and immediate resolution to mitigate gerrymandering impacts;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that we, the undersigned, call upon both houses of the North Carolina General Assembly to create and enact legislation to appoint a non-partisan committee to redraw House and Senate districts in advance of the timeframe proposed in HB DRH10050-BK-2 (HB 200), prior to midterm elections, and prior to the potential special elections, now under consideration in the Supreme Court; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that such newly drawn districts should insure populations "as nearly equal as practicable," without employing practices akin to "cracking" and "packing," neither considering the residential locations of political candidates, nor incumbent prospects, without biasedly taking into consideration previous election outcomes, without biasedly considering the density of university populations, without using demographic information, such as race, age, ethnicity, linguistic make-up, religion or other class groups in a manner that diminishes the representation of said populations, and without considering the party affiliations of citizens within those voter blocks; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the districts should be drawn contiguously, with compactness** in mind and following natural boundaries whenever possible, *(**See Moon Duchin, Director of the Science, Technology, and Society Program at Tufts University. Along with her organization, the Metric Geometry and Gerrymandering Group, Duchin has been consulting with state officials and redistricting committees in the use of metric geometry to measure district compactness. Other mathematicians, such as John Mackenzie of the College of Agricultural Sciences University of Delaware, have also contributed to the study of compactness as related to gerrymandering. Mackenzie offers a mathematical formula for "indexing the degree to which a political district has been gerrymandered," though subjective input may still be required for determining natural boundaries);* and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that regardless of the methods used in redrawing North Carolina's districts, resulting districts most closely resemble boxes and rectangles, as opposed to snakes and octopi; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this Resolution should be immediately distributed to all members of the North Carolina General Assembly; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that following the completion of the redistricting task set forth above, we, the undersigned, demand a cessation of the practice of partisan gerrymandering once and for all.