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HR 74 Sponsor Testimony

Federalism and Interstate Relations Committee

Madame Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Lipps, Ranking Member Leland and members of the House Federalism and Interstate Relations Committee. Thank you very much for giving HR 74 a place on today's agenda.

The overarching aim of House Resolution 74 can be found in lines 80-82. Those lines call upon the Ohio House of Representatives to join various Ohio local governments, grassroots organizations and everyday Ohioans who have called for an amendment to the US Constitution that would, "abolish corporate personhood and the doctrine of money as speech and thereby return our democracy, our elections and our communities" to everyday Ohioans and everyday Americans.

If money is speech then those with the most money have the loudest voice in the creation of public policy. If all Ohioans were wealthy, perhaps this would not be a problem but as many of you know, 3.8 million Ohioans qualify for federal food bank assistance. That means about one-third of the state's residents are probably more concerned about spending their money on food rather than contributing to Ohio's next Governor or any of us. Since 2005, Ohio's poverty rate has been higher than the national average. In addition since 2003, Ohio's median household income has been below the national average.

The current rules of game are tilted towards corporate interests and their political goals. Corporations are not people. Corporations do not need healthy food, clean water and sufficient housing to survive. Elections are not to vote for the betterment of business, they are for the betterment of the general public who create those businesses.

In 2010, the US Supreme Court ruling in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* overturned decades of campaign finance law and gave corporations, billionaires and super PACs new privileges to spend unlimited amounts of money to promote or defeat political candidates. This is the money that decides who runs, who wins and who governs.

In 2014, the Brennan Center for Justice of the New York University School of Law did an analysis of campaign spending since the 2010 *Citizens United vs. the FEC* Supreme Court decision. This report found that of the \$1 billion spent in federal elections by super PACs from 2010 through 2014, nearly 60 percent of the money came from just 195 individuals and their spouses. By equating money to speech, we have allowed a very small group of extremely wealthy individuals to speak for the general public. This resolution will restore the people's choice and the people's voice thereby ensuring that every vote counts.

When surveyed about free speech, campaign finance limits and the *Citizen's United* decision, 83% of Americans (85% of Dems; 81% of Reps and 78% of Inds) want *Citizen's United* to be overturned to make way for limits on corporate spending in elections. 66% of small business owners believe that *Citizens United* undermines markets by making it hard for small businesses to compete with large corporate players.

Ladies and gentleman of the Committee this resolution seeks to remove the concentrated, corrupting influence of money out of our elections and our politics. Just as litigants have the right to impartial justice, citizens should have a right to a Representative (or a Senator) who will weigh the interests of all constituents, not merely moneyed supporters. This will secure our collective right of equal representation and human liberty and it makes effective, honest government possible.