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Testimony regarding H.R. 74

I am submitting this testimony because I am truly concerned about the destructive impact that unprecedented amounts of money are having on our politics. This “dark money” is adversely affecting many Ohioans' lives. Citizens feel hopeless and lack agency to influence legislators on issues of importance to them. I have seen this apathy firsthand last summer when registering voters at our local library. So many people *refused* the opportunity to register to vote. The general sentiment was that voting “really doesn't matter because they [politicians] don't listen to me anyway.....” This is not the attitude of an engaged voter in a healthy democracy; it is the attitude of a hopeless voter in a broken, dysfunctional democracy. And the culprit is money.

This money is literally affecting Ohioans' lives. As most of you are well aware, Ohio is the midst of a devastating opioid crisis. Legislators should be fighting the proliferation of these drugs, not enabling them. As a former substance abuse professional, I have worked with opioid addicted patients and seen the horrible effects of addiction. But our legislators seem to have higher priorities than fighting this scourge: they want to court Big Pharma companies who will donate millions to their campaign instead. One only needs to look at the 60 Minutes expose on how Congress passed a bill that *weakened* the ability of the DEA and actually facilitated the distribution of painkillers to areas of the country that were fighting the crisis to see how the impact of money further destroyed Ohio communities. The CBS report cites the “revolving door” of lobbyists between the Congress and pharmaceutical industry as the reason for the bill. Surely, Ohioans deserve better.

This money is affecting my family's own bottom line. My husband is a small business owner who makes moisture analyzers for other companies that need to monitor CO2 and other emissions. He mostly receives most of his business through his website. The impact that net neutrality rollback could have on his business is significant. He may not be able to compete with corporations to pay for higher tiers of access to his website. So he will lose business. One of drivers of the rollback was Ajit Pai, a former lawyer for Verizon, a company that would benefit from the rollback. It is apparent the contributions from Comcast, Verizon, and other telecommunications companies to the Administration facilitated this rollback. Meanwhile, the consumers' voices are drowned.

These examples all reflect the corruption of democracy. It is incumbent that legislators take action to combat this corruption now. The solution is in front of us: an amendment to the Constitution that would end corporate personhood and the idea that money is free speech. This bill, H.R. 74, is an important step in reaching that end goal. I wholeheartedly offer my support for it.