

Chairman Blessing, Vice-Chair Reineke, Ranking Member Clyde, and all other members of the House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer opposing testimony on House Joint Resolution 19.

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Carrie Eickleberry, an activist and concerned citizen, here today to give fact based arguments against the advancement of House Joint Resolution 19.

Since the passage of the I&R (Initiative & Referendum) amendment in 1912, there have been a total of 74 citizen-initiated ballot proposals. Of those 74, only 19 have been successful at the polls. From 2006 to current there have been 39 constitutional amendments certified for the ballot by the Ohio Attorney General, eight of those made the ballot, three of them won.

History shows the citizen initiative process and success at the ballot have never been easy, with less than a quarter of the ballot proposals passing. The costs to place an amendment on the ballot and succeed, have increased significantly. This year, we saw a collective of grassroots activists fight hard to gain access to the ballot for an initiative to lower the penalties of non-violent drug offenders. Their group spent more than eleven million dollars towards the campaign, including close to four million spent to collect the 306,591 valid signatures required, resulting in a total cost per required signature of \$11.97. After spending all of that money, they lost. Even with out of state funding they lost by a wide margin; proving once again, that the ballot process and wins are not easy.

If a layman were to hear one of the legislators speak in support of HJR 19, they would most likely think the number of citizen initiated constitutional amendments wins would be significantly higher than what it is.

The proponent's arguments are flawed and the proof is in the numbers.

One of the reasons the argument for these proposed changes is flawed would be the passage of Issue 2 in 2015. Let us not forget that we already have a measure in place to protect the constitution from anyone or group that would attempt to use the constitution in a monopolistic way. With the passage of Issue 2, legislators made it so that there is no monetary reward for funding a ballot initiative and winning at the polls. Let us not forget that this law is still in place.

I've heard all of the proponents mention special interest groups. They say the constitution is under attack and they need to protect the constitution. However, since the year 2000 five citizen initiated constitutional amendments have passed.

2004	CICA	Amendment 1	Marriage
2006	CICA	Amendment 2	Min Wage
2009	CICA	Amendment 3	Gambling

2011	CICA	Issue 3	Healthcare (remve requirements)
2017	CICA	Issue 1	Law Enforcement (mary's law)

Three of these five garnered heavy support from the majority party and were funded by special interest groups, sometimes from out of state. As was the case with Mary's Law in 2017. The campaign for Mary's Law, which was co chaired by Mike Dewine, spent more than ten million dollars to succeed at the ballot. Ten million dollars of their campaign money came from one man. Not an Ohioan. Henry Nicholas is the man who donated the ten million to the campaign and he lives in California. If the point is to keep outside interests from our constitution, why was there not a problem with Mr. Nicholas donating more than 90% of the campaign money for Marcy's law?!

If there wasn't a problem with Henry Nicholas why is there a problem with Chan Zuckerberg? Chan Zuckerberg's advocacy group was the top funder of the 2018 Issue 1 campaign. The group donated three million to a campaign that lost by a wide margin. Goes to show that it doesn't matter who throws money at a ballot initiative or how much, if the voters don't want the issue to pass, it won't.

If the process was really meant for regular, non millionaire citizens of Ohio to use, it would not be so costly and unattainable for us. If you look at the long list of those ballot initiatives that have been certified but never made the ballot; you will see that the large majority are founded by those regular citizens of Ohio. Those citizens don't have the means to gather the now close to a million signatures and coordinate a campaign effort. That is a huge undertaking. I've been apart of an effort to place an initiative on the statewide ballot as a volunteer. I can tell you the task is daunting. It will consume your life. Everyday citizens, caught in the rat race of paying the bills can't always afford to commit such large amounts to time to something like a ballot initiative, even though it may the be the thing they are most passionate about.

The bottomline is, what you are asking Ohio citizens to do with the newly proposed requirements is impossible. If your point is to rid Ohio of special interest group money and a so called "cottage industry" attack on the constitution, you are doing the opposite of what should be done to make that happen. If you truly want to make it possible for the average citizen to make change, you would lower the barriers in front of us, rather than raise them.

Members of the committee, I urge you to consider my testimony and vote no to prevent HJR 19 from advancing. If charges are to be made to the process in the future please take in to account every day citizen activists like myself for a minute, instead of those big money interest groups.

Thank you for your time and allowing me to speak my testimony today. I will now take any questions you may have.

