

Good morning, thank you Representative West for inviting me to support this important issue today.

My name is Connie Rubin. I live in North Canton, Ohio, in Stark County, and serve as President of Coming Together Stark County, a 21-year-old non-profit organization whose mission is to fight prejudice and promote inclusion of all people. Our organization applauds this effort to showcase the need for more diversity and gender equity in the Boardrooms of Ohio corporations.

Over 100 years ago, on June 16, 1919, the men in the Ohio Legislature voted nearly unanimously to endorse the 19th Amendment, guaranteeing the right to vote to women. Today--100 years later--*only one quarter* of our State Legislature are women and minorities. That might be laughable, were not most corporate boardrooms even less diverse than that. So it's appropriate for our Ohio Legislature to challenge our state's titans of industry with this Concurrent Resolution to increase diversity and gender equity at the highest levels of management.

It's also time for Ohio's corporations, businesses of all sizes, and non-profit organizations to reflect the fact that 50% or more of their customers are women.

Their management personnel should reflect those consumers who are critical to their profits.

Thousands of women entrepreneurs are contributing to Ohio's economy.

Thousands more are leaders in family businesses. Moms, daughters, sisters, and nieces are serving overseas and in Ohio in our armed forces. Women are leaders in our hospitals, they serve as Presidents of our universities and colleges, and sit as judges in our courtrooms in County Courthouses, the Ohio Supreme Court, and the U.S. Supreme Court.

We all know that the 19th Amendment was *not* a panacea for voting rights. It took an Act of Congress in 1924 to assure that Native Americans got the right to vote, but some states continued to bar them from voting until 1957. It took another law in 1952 to grant naturalized Asian American immigrants the right to vote. Full voting rights for African American men and women were not granted until passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

So although this Concurrent Resolution is not a panacea, it calls on Ohio businesses to do the right thing, and its implementation in Boardrooms will have

important ripple effects for wages, working conditions, and policies of Ohio's increasingly diverse workplaces and consumers.

Our great nation's motto, E Pluribus Unum, "out of many, one," calls on all of us to aspire to embrace that diversity. This Concurrent Resolution challenges the male leadership of Ohio's corporate boardrooms to lead us all into a future that reflects our changing culture. It calls on male leaders to embrace diversity, not just because it is the right thing to do, but because it will improve their profits and reward achievement. Corporate boardrooms are one of the last bastions of masculinity, and it's past time to open those doors to more diverse viewpoints.

As the indomitable Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg has said, "Women belong in all places where decisions are being made!"