

Chairman/woman Blessing, Vice Chair Reinecke, Ranking Member Clyde, and members of the Government Accountability and Oversight Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Charlotte Owens. I am a college tutor and instructor, and an active citizen who has been involved in local and state petition drives. I am strongly opposed to HJR 19.

As someone who has been involved in petition drives for volunteer and nonprofit organizations, I can tell you that getting enough signatures to get a state constitutional amendment on the ballot is currently very difficult for grassroots organizations. If you doubt this, try to find out from the Secretary of State's office how many petitions are approved for circulation that are never turned in because they never got enough signatures.

HJR19, while claiming to make it more difficult for organizations or businesses with lots of financial resources to get a constitutional amendment passed, actually discriminates against grassroots people much more. (Businesses or organizations with large budgets can hire signature collectors and also do the marketing.) Getting the number of signatures collected by volunteers is already a stunning achievement. Getting them in 6 months (winter months before April 1) is virtually impossible. When intended or not, HJR 19 is a profound attack on the rights of average people in Ohio.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote NO on HJR19, which undermines the rights of the people of Ohio to govern themselves.