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★ ADVOCACY ★

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Written Testimony in Opposition to HJR 6 Ohio House Government Oversight Committee December 7, 2022

Thank you, Chair and Members of the Ohio House Government Oversight Committee for the opportunity to testify in opposition to this legislation.

My name is Tracy Grinstead-Everly. I am a social justice attorney and proud member of the board of directors of the National Council of Jewish Women, Cleveland Section. NCJW is a grassroots organization of volunteers and advocates who turn progressive ideals into action. Inspired by Jewish values, NCJW strives for social justice by improving the quality of life for women, children, and families and by safeguarding individual rights and freedoms.

Throughout its history, NCJW has worked to expand voting rights, drive voter turnout, educate on the issues, and engage advocates. That work continues, nationally and locally, through one of our core programs, Promote the Vote, Protect the Vote. We are a nonpartisan organization dedicated to helping citizens understand the political process and issues at stake, with the ultimate goal of meaningful government engagement with all eligible voters. That is why we join others across the political spectrum in urging you to reject HJR 6.

For more than 100 years, Ohio citizens have had the right to use ballot initiatives to have a say in their government. At a time when people are less confident in the political process and their government officials, we should be encouraging government transparency and participation in our democratic process. Instead, through HJR 6, this body would make it harder for citizens to make their voices heard, requiring a supermajority of 60% to approve initiatives.

This significant change is particularly troubling, given the process being followed. Rather than introduce this issue to be debated and decided by the will of the people in a general election, it is being rushed through hearings during lame duck session. Perhaps this is because members of this body know such an initiative would not be approved by their constituents.

As of 2021, none of the 23 states with a process for citizen-initiated state statutes or veto referendums required a supermajority vote of approval to adopt them.¹ This attempt thwart democracy has a long history of failing at the ballot box, dating back to Washington state in

¹ Ballotpedia

1914.² In more recent history, it failed in Colorado in 1996.³ It failed a 55% supermajority requirement in South Dakota in 2018.⁴ It failed in Michigan in 2000.⁵ Most recently, constitutional amendments on the ballot in 2022 in Arkansas and South Dakota to require a three-fifths (60%) supermajority vote for the approval of citizen-led ballot measures both failed.⁶

Finally, requiring a 60% vote on ballot initiatives seems like an ironically undemocratic action, given that 27 members of the Ohio State House won their races last month to represent their constituents by less than 60% of the votes cast.⁷

For all the reasons herein, I and the over 2,000 members of NCJW/CLE across the state of Ohio I represent, urge you to vote against HJR6. Thank you for your time and consideration.

² Id.

³ Id.

⁴ Id.

⁵ Id.

⁶ Id.

⁷ 2022 Official Election Results, Ohio Secretary of State