



**Opponent Testimony of Molly Shack  
on behalf of the Ohio Organizing Collaborative  
Regarding House Joint Resolution 6  
Ohio House Government Oversight Committee  
December 7, 2022**

Chair Wilkin, Vice Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Brown and Members of the Ohio House Government Oversight Committee,

My name is Molly Shack, I serve as Co-Executive Director of the Ohio Organizing Collaborative. We offer our testimony in opposition to House Joint Resolution 6—this proposal is undemocratic, unfair and a flagrant attempt to silence the power of Ohioans' voices. Raising the threshold for passing citizen initiated ballot measures to 60% will do nothing to protect Ohio's constitution. The citizen initiated ballot initiative process is already very difficult, making it even more difficult will only protect the statehouse's power at the expense of the people of Ohio.

At the OOC, we know that the ability to make our voices heard in our democracy is the bedrock of building healthy, safe and equitable communities where all of our families can thrive. Rather than taking steps to solve actual problems millions of Ohioans are facing, this committee is advancing an antidemocratic policy solution for a problem that doesn't exist.

In the last twenty years, less than twenty citizen-initiated ballot initiatives have been put to Ohioans on the ballot for consideration, and less than a quarter of them have been approved. Ohioans already rarely approve these sorts of proposals—they are reluctant to change the Ohio Constitution. There is no need to solve a problem that doesn't exist.

Backers of this bill claim to want to prevent special interests from changing our constitution, but the recently passed anti corruption bill prevents the kind of self dealing language that voters have rejected in the past. If the Ohio General Assembly wanted to protect the constitution, they would do more to pass popular policy solutions to the problems in our communities and would make the process for citizen initiated legislation easier.

We the people as Ohioans are not special interests. For more than a hundred years, Ohioans have had the power to set the policy agenda for our state and enshrine rights into our state

constitution through direct democracy. Citizen-led constitutional ballot initiatives are incredibly difficult and are not undertaken lightly. To place a constitutional amendment on the ballot, citizen groups are required to collect nearly half a million verified signatures from at least half of Ohio's counties and face scrutiny from the Attorney General and the Ballot Board. Changing the rules so only 40% of voters can block the will of the rest of the state's citizens when these issues are on the ballot is unfair and wrong. Ohio's voters deserve to keep their right to decide critical issues at the ballot box and prevent politicians in Columbus from ignoring the will of the people.

I have collected signatures for a wide range of citizen lead initiatives over the last 10 years in dozens of counties across Ohio. When Ohio voters are presented with an opportunity to sign a petition for a proposed constitutional amendment, they exercise their voice on whether they want to see it on the ballot. Once an issue is on the ballot, Ohioans exercise their voice on the value of the policy proposed before them. The threshold for those decisions should remain at majority approval, rather than 60%. That majority approval is how you all were elected to be members of the Ohio General Assembly.

The Ohio Organizing Collaborative believes in democracy, we believe that the voices of Ohioans should be heard when we decide to work to put an issue on the ballot. If HJR 6 is referred to the ballot, Ohioans will defeat it. We will not give away our own power.

Thank you,

Molly Shack  
Co-Executive Director  
Ohio Organizing Collaborative

# Targeted Action Alert

## TARGETED ACTION TEMPLATE

### Internal

**Name of Action:** DATE SUBJECT Action Alert

**Description:** This action alert will...

### Targets

**Targets (ex. State Legislators, Govt. Agencies, etc.):**

### Letter to Targets

**Topic (environment, energy, taxes, elections, etc):**

**Subject Line (if pertaining to a bill, include bill number in subject):**

**Body of Message:**

**Tweet:**

# Member Email

## EMAIL TO MEMBERSHIP

To: Democracy List, Statehouse Action Takers

Suppress List: Do Not Email

From: Chris Tavenor

Subject Line: Our Democracy is on the line. Say NO to HJR 6 [Red Siren Emoji]

Body:

<<Preview Text>>

[ HEADER PHOTO ]

Dear <<First Name>>,

**The attacks on our democracy continue.** The Ohio General Assembly, during *Lame Duck*, is now considering House Joint Resolution 6, a proposed constitutional amendment that would absolutely devastate our right to direct democracy.

[VIDEO]

**We must take action. Submit testimony prior to 3pm on Tuesday, December 7** (24 hours before the Committee hearing) by emailing this [witness slip](#) to [GovernmentOversightCommittee@ohiohouse.gov](mailto:GovernmentOversightCommittee@ohiohouse.gov) with your testimony attached. **And show up to testify in person, too!** You can download a testimony template here. Just fill in the blanks!

Right now, in Ohio, we place constitutional amendments on the ballot through the citizen-initiated process, requiring hundreds of thousands of signatures. Once we gather the signatures, the language is placed on the ballot in the next general election, and Ohioans across the state consider the substantive question and whether it should be enshrined in the Ohio Constitution.

It's a difficult task, and even when a question is placed before voters, Ohioans are fickle. Not many constitutional amendments pass.

**But through ballot initiatives, a majority of voters tell the legislature what the public wants to get done.** For more than 100 years, Ohio voters have used ballot initiatives to get issues on the ballot so voters can pass laws that help our communities. State legislators have a moral and constitutional responsibility to respect the will of the people.

**In recent years, some politicians tried to block or limit ballot initiatives that voters already approved.** Now, they are trying to make it harder for voters to propose and pass ballot initiatives that they don't agree with. They can't win fairly, so they are trying to rewrite the rules to get their way—no matter what the majority wants.

***We must oppose HJR 6. Submit your testimony today. We need an overwhelming consensus of opposition before the committee to kill HJR 6.***

Use our testimony template, fill in the blanks, and submit it to the [House Government Oversight Committee](#) by 3pm on Tuesday, December 7 alongside a [witness slip](#).

**We thank you for joining us in the fight both for a healthy environment and for a healthy democracy.** We cannot have either without ensuring both.

Yours in the fight,

[ PHOTO ]

Chris Tavenor

Managing Director of Democracy Policy

P.S. If you aren't able to submit testimony, you can take actions in other ways, too! You can [\[X.Y.Z\]](#)

# Action Alert Landing Page

## AA Landing Page

Title:

Body:

Images:

# Action Alert Confirmation Page

## AA Confirmation Page

Title:

Body:

Thank you for taking action!

The power of our combined voices can not be overestimated. We appreciate you speaking out to protect Ohio's vital water resources. Can we count on you to take the next step?

Share this action alert with your friends and family today!

Images:

# Follow-Up Email to Action Taker

## Follow Up Email to Action Taker

**Subject Line:** Thank you, <First Name>!

**Body of Message:**

Thank you for taking action, <First Name>!

The power of our combined voices can not be overestimated. We appreciate you speaking out to protect Ohio's vital water resources. Can we count on you to take the next step?

Share this action alert with your friends and family today!

Yours in the fight,

## Social Copy

Action Alert Social

Scorecard Social

Press Release Social

## Scorecard Letter

\_\_\_\_\_, 2022

To: Members of the Ohio Chamber

From: Trish Demeter, President, Ohio Environmental Council Action Fund

Re: Bill #

Dear Honorable **Title**,

I am writing to inform you that the Ohio Environmental Council (OEC) Action Fund will be scoring **\_\_\_\_\_ (XX #)** for the purposes of our Legislative Scorecard for the 134th Ohio General Assembly. **We urge a \_\_ vote on \_\_\_\_\_.** To the extent that **\_\_\_\_\_** passes, the OEC Action Fund will be doing extensive public education on the content and the votes on this legislation due to its **\_\_\_\_\_** impact to Ohio's environment and the health of Ohioans.

BODY OF LETTER WITH BILL SPECIFICS

CONCLUSION

If you have any questions, please direct them to Trish Demeter at [tdemeter@theoec.org](mailto:tdemeter@theoec.org).

Sincerely,

Pete Bucher  
President  
OEC Action Fund

## Press Release

For Immediate Release

Date

Contact:

Emily Bacha, Ohio Environmental Council Action Fund, [ebacha@theoec.org](mailto:ebacha@theoec.org)

### Title

Location – Background Information.

*The following quote can be attributed, in whole or in part, to Name, Title for the Ohio Environmental Council (OEC) Action Fund:*

“Quote.

“Second paragraph quote if needed.”

###

The Ohio Environmental Council Action Fund is committed to protecting and enhancing the environment and the health of all Ohio communities. We will continue to fight for Ohio's access to clean water, healthy air, vibrant public lands and a strong democracy.