

House Joint Resolution 1
Austin Boxler
Opponent Testimony
House Constitutional Resolutions Committee

April 19, 2023

Chair Plummer, Vice Chair Hillyer, Ranking Member Mohamed, and Members of the House Constitutional Resolutions Committee,

I appreciate the opportunity to testify today. My name is Austin Boxler. I am an Ohioan, born and raised. I grew up around Hartville, my family is scattered across the state, and I've been living and working in the city of Cleveland for the last decade. I strongly oppose HJR 1 and I implore this committee not to support it.

I oppose this resolution because it is unequivocally a usurpation of the power of the people in this state. "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people." 'Or to the people' becomes clearer from historical analysis. Citizens fought to secure more power for the people in 1912 when they amended the Ohio Constitution to allow citizens to initiate amendments, initiate new laws, and overturn laws passed by this body. This was undeniably the culmination of a societal consensus that the people have ultimate authority to rule in this state, and not our legislature. The 17th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution only confirmed that by removing this body's authority to select our Senators, instead leaving it to the people to decide. Ohioans have used but not abused these powers to shape our state and to ensure that we truly have a representative democracy.

HJR1 insults all of those who fought to put power in the hands of the people of Ohio, and those who are paying attention to this moment. The General Assembly is trying to claw back power from the people. To make it so difficult to reach the ballot, and to require such a high threshold for passage, all but certainly ensures that the state legislature will make all the decisions moving forward. This is the same legislature embroiled in scandal over gerrymandering and First Energy corruption, which has caused citizens to question this body's electoral mandate already. It is hard to imagine any other motive than corruption or tyranny for this bill.

Please take a step back from this. It threatens our state's democratic legacy. Once out of office, you too will just be one of us, one of the people.

Thank you.