

House Joint Resolution 1
Melissa Meyer
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,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Melissa Meyer. I am in my 18th year as a middle school math teacher at Berea City School District. I strongly oppose HJR1. My testimony today is in opposition to HJR1. HJR1 is NOT representative of the People of Ohio. It is a resolution that will restrict Ohio Citizens' rights. This consolidated effort from our lawmakers to change the Ohio Constitution in order to make it harder for Ohio citizens to successfully pass ballot initiatives is a power grab, plain and simple. It is unnecessary, unfair, unpopular, and undemocratic.

HJR 1 would require 60% of voters to approve any constitutional amendment. This raises it from 50%+1 approval that is currently required. Since 1912, only 19 out of 71 citizen initiated constitutional amendments have passed in Ohio, so a higher threshold isn't necessary. There should be all kinds of questions around proposals to make access to citizen-led amendments more difficult. That should never be the goal of an elected official. It is not the job description, nor the responsibility of the Secretary of State to invent policy initiatives that will impact Constitutional law and the right of Ohioans to amend their constitution for generations to come.

HJR1 would also undermine our democracy by giving the minority the power to dictate policy to the majority of Ohioans. HJR 1 would enshrine minority rule into our state constitution. Ohioans have the power of direct democracy in three ways: through citizen-led constitutional amendments, initiated statutes, and referenda. Only Ohioans and citizens in 14 other states possess these tools to check the power of state government. As lawmakers fall more out-of-step with the will of everyday voters, tools

like this become more precious and their defense more important. Ironically, the amendment actually asks voters to approve - by a simple majority- a rule to require a supermajority of all future ballot initiatives.

HJR1 would make it harder for citizen-led constitutional amendments to make the ballot. Instead of needing 5% of registered voters from 44 counties, citizens would need 5% from each of Ohio's 88 counties. Failure to get the required signatures in one county could prevent an issue from getting on the ballot. The process is not overused. There hasn't been a citizen initiated ballot measure before voters since 2018. Over the past 10 years, there were only four elections with ballot measures through signature collection. In the past 50 years, there were 28 years without a citizen initiative on the ballot. Of those elections that had a ballot measure, only a handful of the elections had more than one issue for voters to consider.

Thank you for your time in hearing my voice. To reiterate, I vehemently oppose HJR1 because HJR 1 would take power away from the majority of Ohioans while special interest groups and corrupt politicians gain more power. It will make it almost impossible for anyone *except* big money special interests to successfully pass a ballot initiative in Ohio. Please show me that you represent the majority of citizens who, rather than the special interest groups, do not want our rights being further removed, by voting NO on HJR1.

I ask you to reject any proposal that would take power away from the voters. This type of proposal is unpopular with voters and rigs the game against Ohioans. We deserve better.