



**May 2, 2023**

**House Constitutional Resolutions Committee**

**SJR 2 Opponent Testimony**

**Presented by Melissa Cropper, President of the Ohio Federation of Teachers**

Chair Plummer, Vice-Chair Hillyer, Ranking Member Mohamed, and members of the House Constitutional Resolutions Committee, I am Melissa Cropper, President of the Ohio Federation of Teachers (OFT). OFT represents teachers in traditional and charter schools, support staff, higher education faculty and staff, social workers, library employees, and other public employees across the state of Ohio. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in opposition to SJR 2.

SJR 2 is an issue that has been thoroughly discussed and deliberated by the Executive Council of the Ohio Federation of Teachers. At our February board meeting, the Council – consisting of members who identify as Independent, Democrat, and Republican – unanimously passed a resolution to oppose SJR 2 and authorized the leadership and staff of OFT to mobilize members in an effort to stop it from passing.

OFT members strongly value the rights we have as citizens of Ohio to have a direct say in our government by using citizen-led ballot initiatives. We respect the current process that has been in place for over one hundred years – a process that is stringent, requiring thousands of signatures in at least half of the counties to get on the ballot and a 50% plus one vote to win, but still giving the voters of Ohio a fair chance to make changes that reflect their values.

SJR 2 is an unfair process that would make it nearly impossible for a citizen-led initiative to even get on the ballot. Collecting signatures from all 88 counties not only requires an amount of money that only big money special interests can generate, it also allows a small minority, potentially the smallest county in the state, to suppress the will of the majority.

In addition, SJR 2 works to suppress the will of the majority in this state by requiring a 60% vote to pass an amendment instead of the simple majority that is currently in place. To our members, raising this requirement that has served this state well for over one hundred years is an unnecessary, undemocratic attempt to suppress the voice of the voters while giving more power to the politicians. In a gerrymandered state like Ohio, preserving the right of the people to hold politicians accountable to the will of the majority is critical to preserving our democracy.

Our members understand that this suppression of the majority's voice not only has the potential to impact us as individuals on issues we care about on a personal level, but also to impact our profession and our professional lives. As education professionals, we care deeply about the students we teach and the public schools – traditional and charter – we work in. We know from our work with parents and community stakeholders that education might someday need to be on the ballot to protect the will of the majority. Requirements for petition signatures in all 88 counties or for a 60% majority for passage of the initiative would not only turn this task from difficult to nearly impossible, but would also make it a minority rule decision instead of truly reflecting the will of the majority of Ohio citizens.

On behalf of the members of the Ohio Federation of Teachers, I urge you to stand with the people of Ohio and with the members of OFT by voting no on SJR 2.