

## **OPPONENT TESTIMONY OF:**

Anisa Liban

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## **IN OPPOSITION OF: SJR 2**

Good morning Chairman Plummer, Ranking Member Mohamed, and Members of the House Constitutional Resolutions Committee, my name is Anisa Liban and I serve as the Government Affairs Director at CAIR-Ohio. The Council on American Islamic Relations is the largest Muslim Civil Rights organization in the nation—its Ohio Chapter serves thousands of Ohioans in Central Columbus, Cincinnati, and Cleveland.

I am here today in opposition of Senate Joint Resolution 2 and to urge members of the committee to prioritize the people of Ohio who have vocalized their concerns with this unpopular and unnecessary proposal.

For over 111 years, Ohioans have resided in this great state with the freedom to mobilize and petition for amendments to the Ohio constitution. This proposal would not only overturn a century-old right, but would directly impact residents who work hard to engage and educate disenfranchised minority communities on a wide-range of topics, including redistricting reform. This impacts not only voting rights, but healthcare access, access to education, civil and economic justice, and much more. All of which are issues we combat regularly as an organization. Resolutions like this obstruct the voting rights of every Ohioan. SJR2 would also negate our continuous efforts as an organization to empower Muslims and underrepresented communities.

This resolution is terrifying as it negatively impacts Ohioans' access to direct democracy and dismisses the voices of countless residents whose votes will not be considered as a result of this minority-rule mindset. Requiring a 60% vote is simply unfair.

Our democracy cannot be fully called one, when the basic tenets and bedrock of democracy, of allowing citizens to have a say in their government, are made more difficult. SJR2 poses barriers for Ohioans to pass a citizen-led ballot initiative to amend the state constitution, as a democracy it is imperative to facilitate, and provide access to the public to voice their concerns and lead ballot initiatives.

If an amendment is going to apply to **every Ohioan**, we at CAIR-Ohio believe then every community should have a say in putting that potential constitution amendment on the ballot.

Do the votes of Ohio's most marginalized communities not matter?

- What message are we sending to Ohioans who are eager to have their voices heard on important issues?

- What message are we sending to immigrants & refugees, who left their homes in pursuit of a just democracy?
- What message are we sending to youth & minorities whose participation in the 2018 elections led to the highest midterm turnout in four decades—[according to the 2020 U.S. Census Bureau](#).

Supporters of this resolution will tell you this resolution prevents corruption from special-interest groups and that citizen-led ballot measures are overused to push specific agendas; but rest assured citizen-led ballot measures aren't overused. In fact, Ohio has not had a citizen-led ballot since 2018.

With that, I strongly urge the committee to consider the negative impact of this legislation will have not only on voters, but on all citizen-led efforts and **to vote no on SJR2**.