



Arthur Lavin MD
Chair, Doctors Organized for Health Care Solutions
May 28, 2024

Dear State Medical Board of Ohio,

My name is Dr. Arthur Lavin and I am a retired pediatrician and head of a group of 400 physicians in Greater Cleveland, who are organized to promote the integrity of the core purposes of our profession, devoted to the just provision of health care.

I appear before the Government Oversight Committee of the Ohio House of Representatives to testify against the passage of any legislation that would silence the voices of Ohio's citizens through the time-honored process of citizen led ballot initiatives. Ohio is one of only 26 states that allow this process to occur, and it is a process highly valued in our state. The right for citizens to put initiatives on the ballot goes back over 100 years and is a right taken seriously.

During this special session of our Ohio General Assembly, called into session by our Governor, a number of bills have been proposed by the Ohio Senate and the Ohio House. Each attempt to burden the process of citizen's bringing an initiative to the ballot with complex prohibitions against contributions by any source that can be traced to outside the United States. Certainly there is broad consensus against the interference in any democratic process by strong and powerful state enemies, such as Russia, China, or Iran.

But it is quite obvious that these bills are not intended to respond to possible interference from Russia, China, or Iran. If they were, they would block their interference in *all* ballot initiatives, including those initiated by Ohio's General Assembly. The lack of any language protecting ballot initiatives from the General Assembly reveals the real intent of the proposed legislation has nothing to do with our enemies or their threats.

Instead, these bills reveal that the sponsors see our fellow Ohio citizens as their threat. The bills construct suspicions that would confront me, or any citizen of Ohio, with the threat of prosecution for daring to organize a citizen led ballot initiative. Any such organizer would face liability should anyone with even a green card contributed to the effort. Contributions from like-minded very American based organizations could be found to have been partly funded by sympathetic friends from Canada, Mexico, or other friendly nations around the world. We live in a highly interconnected world, that is our deep reality. Passing legislation making it a crime for those connections to exist simply makes every citizen fear for state prosecution when even thinking about exercising a right every citizen of Ohio has cherished for over a century.

The doctors of Northeast Ohio have their eyes open to the actions of the General Assembly and their actual intent to silence our voices. And not just the doctors, but all we care for, all the citizens of Ohio are becoming aware of what these attempts are trying to achieve. The citizens of Ohio are watching. And as many of their doctors, we appear in testimony before this important Committee of the House of Representatives, to call on this crucial bastion of democracy to reject all attempts to silence the voice of the citizens, the core of the purpose of a democracy.

Sincerely,
Arthur Lavin MD