



To: House Oversight Committee

From: Camille Wimbish, Ohio Voter Rights Coalition

Re: Opposition to HJR 19

Date: December 5, 2018

My name is Camille Wimbish and I am testifying on behalf of the Ohio Voter Rights Coalition in opposition to HJR 19. Ohioans deserve to be heard at the ballot box. HJR 19 robs everyday Ohioans of our ability to make policy changes when the legislature is unwilling or unable to respond to our needs.

The Ohio Voter Rights Coalition was a member of the Fair Districts = Fair Elections Coalition. In 2017, Fair Districts = Fair Elections volunteers began collecting signatures because leadership in the General Assembly was unwilling to tackle congressional redistricting reform. From every corner of the state, we heard from voters who were fed up. The connection was obvious to voters. Rigged maps created extreme partisanship, government dysfunction and unaccountable elected officials. It was the pressure of a citizens' initiative that ultimately propelled the legislature to strike a compromise and put a reform proposal on the ballot, which was overwhelmingly supported by voters in the May primary. Fair Districts had a modest budget of only \$60,000 and relied on the summer months to collect the bulk of our 200,000+ signatures. Had HJR 19 been in place, it would have been impossible for volunteers to have collected the required signatures in time. To get our proposal on the ballot, we would have had to rely on a "cottage industry" and large amounts of out of state money that bill sponsors say they want to eliminate.

Changes to the constitution should be a serious undertaking. We urge this committee to delay making changes to the citizens' initiative process and the initiated statute process until there has been time to fully vet reform ideas. It would be reckless to rush HJR 19 through in a matter of days, before the public has even had a meaningful opportunity to weigh in.

Thank you for your consideration and I would be happy to answer any questions.

Camille Wimbish  
Election Administration Director  
Ohio Voter Rights Coalition