

Written Testimony to be provided to the Government Accountability and Oversight Committee in Opposition to HJR19

December 11, 2018

To: The Honorable Lewis W. Blessing III, Chairman of the Government Accountability and Oversight Committee, as well as Committee Members.

My name is Mary Nordstrom of 15 West Oak Street, Canal Winchester, Ohio 43110.

As someone who collected signatures for both the Redistricting Initiative and for the Safe and Healthy Ohio Initiative (State Issue 1), I oppose the proposed House Joint Resolution 19 because it would diminish the ability of Ohio's Citizens to initiate ballot measures.

This year I collected hundreds of signatures to place State Issue 1 on the ballot. I lost count after a while, but that number was well over 300. I collected those signatures primarily between March and July at parades, at farmers, markets and at community festivals -- from the St. Patrick's Day Parade in Columbus until Red, White and Boom, also in Columbus. It was my ability to meet people out in the community during this Spring to Summer period that facilitated my collection process. To move the deadline for submitting signatures to April 1 from the first of July would definitely handicap any Initiative process.

As a signature collector, I can testify that the petition process is already a daunting prospect. One of the factors that kept me going was knowing that the signatures would not expire. That all our efforts would not disappear in a puff of smoke were we not to reach the goal by the next deadline.

I am fortunate to have participated in initiative campaigns. I experienced first hand that individual Ohioans want to be heard on issues of importance to them. They want to participate in our democracy. They, however, have limited ability to testify before legislative committees here in Columbus and, for that matter, they are limited in their ability to influence legislators through calls, mail or in person, whether through office visits or town halls. The campaign to get State Issue 1 on the November Ballot heard the desires of 730,000 Ohioans. It offered them an opportunity to be heard -- to make a difference through direct democracy.

The ability of the individual Ohioan to initiate laws is critical to a healthy democracy. House Joint Resolution 19 would make Ohio's direct democratic process more difficult, thereby harming not only the process, but the citizens of Ohio.

I ask you to vote "no" on HJR 19. Thank you.