



Testimony in support of HJR 1

**Ohio House of Representatives
Committee on Constitutional Resolutions**

April 18th, 2023

Beau Euton on behalf of
Madeline Malisa, Visiting Fellow
Opportunity Solutions Project

Chairman Plummer, Vice Chair Hillyer, Ranking Member Mohamed, and honorable members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HJR 1. My name is Beau Euton, and I'm testifying on behalf of Madeline Malisa of the Opportunity Solutions Project, a non-profit, non-partisan advocacy organization that works on initiative integrity issues in states across the country. HJR 1 will require 60 percent of voters to support a constitutional initiative for it to pass.

This is a simple reform with strong roots in American constitutionalism. Constitutions are fundamental law and changing them should be more difficult than enacting a statute. Public policy that is enshrined in the supreme law should have broad support. As a point of reference, the federal constitution can be amended through one of two different processes, both of which require not one, but two supermajority votes.

There are only 18 states that allow citizens to bypass the legislative process and put constitutional amendments on the ballot.¹ Across the country, special interests have hijacked these processes and used them as their own business development tools. When an initiative can be bought by billionaires from California or anywhere else, and passed by a slim majority here in Ohio, it isn't about the will of the voter, it's about the wallet of the funder. America is a republic for a reason, and that's the role elected representatives play, like you in this committee hearing today.

In 2022, Arizona voters approved a 60 percent supermajority to pass ballot measures that approve taxes.² Florida has required a 60 percent vote for constitutional amendments since 2006, and New Hampshire requires two-thirds approval.³

HJR 1 will also increase statewide support by requiring signatures from not less than five percent of electors in each county before being placed on the ballot. Too often, amendment sponsors focus exclusively on gathering signatures in a state's major urban areas, rather than building a truly inclusive, broad-based coalition. This change will provide voters across the state an opportunity to decide what is placed on the ballot.

These commonsense reforms will ensure that amendments to Ohio's Constitution are strongly supported by voters. Thank you for your time, and I am happy to answer any questions.

References

¹ National Conference of State Legislatures, "Initiative and Referendum Processes," (2022), <https://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/initiative-and-referendum-processes.aspx>.

² Ballotpedia, "Supermajority requirements," (2023), https://ballotpedia.org/Supermajority_requirement.

³ *Ibid.*