



Center FOR Christian Virtue

Public Policy. Engagement. Education.

To: Chair Phil Plummer
Vice Chair Brett Hillyer
Ranking Member Ismail Mohamed
House Constitutional Resolutions Committee

April 18, 2023

Re: Support for HJR 1

Chairman Plummer, Vice Chairman Hillyer, Ranking Member Mohamed, and members of the House Constitutional Resolutions Committee,

My name is Nilani Jawahar and I am here on behalf of the Center for Christian Virtue, Ohio's largest Christian public policy organization, to testify in support of House Joint Resolution 1, also known as the Constitution Protection Amendment, which would raise the threshold to amend the Ohio Constitution to 60% of the vote.

As a non-profit organization that has led a successful initiative to amend Ohio's Constitution back in 2004, and received 61.7% of the vote in order to do so, we at CCV believe that the provision required by this constitutional amendment is neither onerous nor unreasonable.

The Ohio Constitution is the most consequential document in our state. It is a foundational document that secures rights and freedoms for all Ohioans today and tomorrow. This is why it is reasonable and proper to raise the threshold to alter it, and make it more difficult for out-of-state special interest groups to buy amendments.

An example of this was with the Issue 1 ballot initiative in 2018 regarding penalties for low-level drug offenses. Petitioners raised \$9.8 million and \$1.4 million in non-monetary contributions. Nearly \$6 million of that came from out-of-state non-profits, including Chan Zuckerberg Advocacy and the Tides Center.¹ This means that more than half the money to fund the initiative to reduce prison sentences for drug offenders in Ohio came from outside Ohio.

¹ <https://www.daytondailynews.com/news/state--regional-govt--politics/cutting-through-the-hype-what-issue-would-mean-ohio/PwBI4cm5DgeltjalcGHpIP/>



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It seems over time the Ohio Constitution has become the vehicle for bad policies related to casinos, marijuana, and other things that Ohioans have not asked for—because if we had, our elected representatives would have been the proper avenue for accomplishing those things.

And it would appear attempts at expanding gambling and drug use are not the worst way our constitutional amendment process can be abused. As we speak, pro-abortion groups are obtaining signatures to put a constitutional amendment on the ballot this November which would create a constitutional right to kill pre-born children in the womb. Tens of thousands of babies will lose their lives each year if approved. Men will be able to coerce and manipulate women into having abortions. Parental rights will be disregarded in guarding teenage girls from dangerous abortion procedures. And the state will not be permitted to enact any health and safety standards to protect mothers. Ohio must stop this extreme amendment from defiling our constitution and harming the people of our great state.

The Ohio Constitution is not for sale and not to be subject to exploitation, and a simple majority should not be enough to alter our foundational charter. HJR 1 strikes the important balance of protecting the integrity of this document, while maintaining the ability of Ohio citizens to directly engage in the policy-making process. For this reason I urge your support of HJR 1. Thank you, Chairman and committee for allowing me to testify, and I am happy to answer any questions.

The Center for Christian Virtue (CCV) is a non-profit, non-partisan organization that endeavors to create an Ohio where God's blessings of life, family, and religious freedom are treasured, respected, and protected. www.ccv.org -- (513) 733-5775