



April 17th, 2023

Dear Chairman Plummer, Vice-Chair Hillyer, Ranking Member Russo, and members of the House Constitutional Resolutions Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer opponent testimony for House Joint Resolution 1. My name is Minister Blyth Barnow. I am the founder of HEAL Ohio, an organization building unlikely alliances to save lives lost to the drug war across the state of Ohio. I am here today because I strongly oppose House Joint Resolution 1.

Everyday I work with Ohioans across the state, particularly clergy, harm reductionists, and family members who have lost loved ones to the drug war. In 2021 I helped to found the Harm Reduction Policy Table, a place where ordinary Ohioans can get together to share concerns and encourage one another to take legislative action. For so long the legislative process has felt out of our reach. So we come together to learn, cheerlead, and act. One of our biggest hurdles is an overwhelming feeling that our legislators don't care about our issues or our voice, that being involved in the legislative process is pointless. There is an all too common feeling that elected officials spend most of their time passing legislation to serve themselves instead of us. We work hard to push back that demoralizing and disenfranchising feeling. Together we have helped to make legislative advancements that have saved lives by expanding naloxone access and Ohio's Good Samaritan law. In 2021 the table had about 5 people, now we have over 140. We are successful because we build more than just our skills, together we build hope that a new Ohio, one where we can all survive and thrive, is possible.

That hope is robust, yet fragile. I urge you to vote NO on any joint resolution, whether it be HJR1 or SJR2, that would raise the passage rate for ballot initiatives to 60%. To pass such legislation is simple confirmation that fairness no longer exists in our state and our voices don't matter to you. It makes the work HEAL Ohio does impossible. It is unwise, unnecessary, undemocratic, and unpopular. It is your duty to preserve our democracy, but more than that - it is your duty to preserve our fragile hope in this beautiful state.

Please vote NO on HJR1 and SJR2.

Prayerfully,

Minister Blyth Barnow
HEAL Ohio
Director
440-220-2090
director@healoh.org