



**children's
defense fund
ohio**

House Constitutional Resolutions Committee

HJR 1 – Opponent Testimony

April 19, 2023

Matthew Tippit, MSW, LSW

Policy Associate

Children's Defense Fund-Ohio

Chairman Plummer, Vice Chair Hillyer, Ranking Member Mohammed and honorable members of the Constitutional Resolutions Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition to proposed House Joint Resolution 1.

My name is Matthew Tippit, and I am a Policy Associate for the Children's Defense Fund-Ohio. Born out of the civil rights movement, our organization has been advocating on behalf of Ohio's children for more than forty years, striving to advance policies and programs that lift children out of poverty, protect them from abuse and neglect, and ensure their access to targeted health care, quality education, and nutritional wellness. We recognize that child well-being is deeply connected to the well-being of our democratic processes and institutions, and we are therefore deeply concerned about the impact HJR 1 would have on both.

The proposed change to the percentage needed to pass for ballot initiatives would result in an even greater consolidation of power within Ohio's legislature, circumventing the power of Ohio citizens to have direct impact on the laws that govern them. It is far less a Democrat versus Republican issue than it is an issue of citizens versus lawmakers. The impact on children would be immense.

In times when ballot measures have been a critical piece of progressing legislation in states across the nation, stripping the effectiveness away from Ohioans is a calculated move. For example, during this past midterm election, Colorado had a measure on the ballot to create a program that would provide free school lunches to all children in public schools. The measure passed 56% (1.3 mill votes) to 43% (1 mill votes). But here in Ohio, under the rule change proposed, a ballot initiative similar to the one from Colorado would have failed despite 300,000 more people wanting free lunch for children. For a visual, that is enough people to fill the Ohio Stadium three times.

HJR 1 is a danger to all Ohioans, especially to those who stand to lose the most and are not yet able to vote for their own interests: our children. It threatens our democracy, our voice, and our power as Ohio citizens.

We urge you to not deliberate this harmful resolution further. Thank you again for your time and consideration on this matter.