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**Ohio House of Representatives - Constitutional Resolutions Committee
Opposition Testimony on HJR 1**

**By
Ronald Gay, Jr
Staff Representative
Communications Workers of America, District 4
April 19th, 2023**

Chair Plummer, Vice Chair Hillyer, Ranking Member Mohamed and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to this resolution that would weaken Ohio's longstanding, and time-tested measure of amending our State Constitution.

My name is Ron Gay and I'm a Staff Representative with the Communications Workers of America, a labor organization representing thousands of active and retired members in communities across this state.

HJR 1, if approved, would make it harder for constitutional issues to get onto the ballot by requiring signature collection in all 88 counties and removing the "cure period," after signatures are turned in when a campaign is allowed to go back out and collect more to try to make up for a shortfall. In addition, HJR1 would require a 60% yes vote to pass a constitutional amendment.

Some lawmakers are also proposing we vote on this at a special August election when voter turnout is traditionally low.

Ohio citizens must already secure hundreds of thousands of verified signatures in at least half of Ohio's 88 counties to put a ballot measure before the voters. It is already necessary for the state legislature to pass proposed amendments by a supermajority. It is already hard to amend the Ohio Constitution. Unfortunately, HJR 1 would make it almost impossible for anyone except big special interests to successfully pass a ballot initiative in Ohio.

HJR 1 is simply an attack on all Ohioans' ability to pass citizen-initiated ballot measures. Ohioans want to protect our freedom to determine our future. We all want the freedom to make decisions that affect our lives. We do not want an overreaching state government that takes away our right to decide what happens in our state. Ballot initiatives let all Ohioans exercise that freedom.

Proposals of this type are not favored by voters, in many diverse states. Similar proposals were defeated in a number of states in recent years. If HJR 1 passes, Ohio would only be joined by one other state to have such an undemocratic threshold of 60%.

HJR 1 rigs the process against everyday Ohioans.

This cynical attack on our democracy is unfair, unpopular, undemocratic, and unnecessary.

We urge all members of this committee to vote no on approving HJR 1.

*Ron Gay, CWA Staff Representative
Communications Workers of America*