



1251 E. Broad Street  
Columbus, OH 43205

House Constitutional Resolution Committee  
Opposition Testimony HJR1  
Melissa Cropper, President  
Ohio Federation of Teachers

Chair Plummer, Vice-Chair Hillyer, Ranking Member Mohamed, and members of the House Constitutional Resolutions Committee, I am Melissa Cropper, President of the Ohio Federation of Teachers (OFT). OFT represents teachers in traditional and charter schools, support staff, higher education faculty and staff, social workers, library employees, and other public employees across the state of Ohio. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in opposition to HJR 1.

HJR 1 is an issue that has been thoroughly discussed and deliberated by the Executive Council of the Ohio Federation of Teachers. At our February board meeting, the Council – consisting of members who identify as Independent, Democrat, and Republican – unanimously passed a resolution to oppose HJR 1 and authorized the leadership and staff of OFT to mobilize members in an effort to stop it from passing.

OFT members strongly value the rights we have as citizens of Ohio to have a direct say in our government by using citizen-led ballot initiatives. We respect the current process that has been in place for over one hundred years - a process that is stringent, requiring thousands of signatures in at least half of the counties to get on the ballot and a 50% plus one vote to win, yet it gives the voters of Ohio a fair chance to make changes that reflect their values.

HJR 1 is an unfair process that would make it nearly impossible for a citizen-led initiative to even get on the ballot. Collecting signatures from all eighty-eight counties not only requires an amount of money that only big money special interests can generate, it also allows a small minority, potentially the smallest county in the state, to suppress the will of the majority.

In addition, HJR 1 works to suppress the will of the majority in this state by requiring a 60% vote to pass an amendment instead of the simple majority that is currently in place. To our members, raising this requirement that has served this state well for over one hundred years is an unnecessary, undemocratic attempt to suppress the voice of the voters while giving more power to the politicians. In a gerrymandered state like Ohio, preserving the right of the people to hold politicians accountable to the will of the majority is critical to preserving our democracy.

For example, our members care deeply about making sure that Ohio's public schools are adequately and equitably funded in a manner consistent with our state constitution. As you know, our school funding formula has been ruled unconstitutional multiple times in the past 26 years. We are hopeful that full implementation of the Fair School Funding Plan will be enacted

and will pass constitutional muster. However, if that does not happen, we recognize that we may need to join together with parents, school administrators, and other community stakeholders to fight for a constitutional amendment that more clearly implements fair school funding. This would take an extreme amount of effort that we would only undertake if necessary. Under the current rules, Ohio voters could fairly decide this issue and make their preference known. If HJR 1 were to pass, we fear that the ballot requirements and 60% voting threshold will silence the majority of Ohioans who want fair and full funding of local public schools.

On behalf of the members of the Ohio Federation of Teachers, I urge you to stand with the people of Ohio and with the members of OFT by voting no on HJR 1.