

TESTIMONY OF:
Sybrina King
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I AM NOT IN SUPPORT OF:
House Joint Resolution 1
Ohio House Constitutional Resolutions Committee

[Columbus, Ohio; April 19, 2023] — I am a lifetime Ohioan who used to be a proud daughter of the state who produced John Glenn, Toni Morrison, and Jack Nicklaus. Now I am dismayed to be a citizen of a state that has become synonymous with gerrymandering, voter suppression, and statehouse corruption.

Since 1912, Ohioans have had the ability to amend their state constitution through ballot initiatives. However, the changes outlined in House Joint Resolution 1 would significantly diminish the success of citizen-led initiatives. I am especially concerned about the proposed change to the threshold needed for passage from the current majority 50% plus one to 60% and adamantly oppose these joint resolutions.

In addition, I am deeply disturbed by the possibility that this resolution might be voted upon in a special August election. Ohio's recently enacted House Bill 458 all but eliminated August elections, citing unnecessary expenses to Ohio citizens and low voter turnout. In Ohio's August 2022 special election, a record low number of 8% of registered voters cast ballots. If there were a similar turnout in an August 2023 election, fewer than 10% of Ohio voters would decide whether to amend the constitution as proposed in HJR1. Seeking to silence Ohio voters is the antithesis of the belief expressed in our state constitution that all political power is inherent in the people.

In closing, I implore that this resolution not pass out of committee. Ohioans deserve to have their voices heard through citizen-led initiatives requiring a simple majority yes vote. Furthermore, I implore that special elections not be held for seemingly partisan political reasons. Ohioans deserve better. Thank you.