

DEVERLAWFIRM^{LLC}

Chairman Rulli, Vice Chairman Schuring, Ranking Member DeMora, and members of the Senate General Government Committee, my name is Jonathan Dever, a former member of the other side of the General Assembly and the Co-Chairman of the Ohio Constitutional Modernization Committee. It is in that latter position that I am here to offer interested party testimony.

The Ohio Constitutional Modernization Commission was a bipartisan, 32-member commission of bipartisan experts and citizens appointed to review and make recommendations for changes to the Ohio Constitution in order to improve its effectiveness and relevance to modern times.

The Commission was charged with reviewing the entire Constitution, including its structure, language, and content, and making recommendations for amendments or updates that would improve its effectiveness and relevance to modern Ohio.

The Commission consisted of members appointed by the Ohio Governor, Speaker of the Ohio House of Representatives, Ohio Senate President, and the Ohio Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. The Commission's work was divided into various subcommittees, each tasked with reviewing specific areas of the Constitution and making recommendations for changes.

The Commission held numerous public hearings throughout Ohio to gather input and feedback from citizens, organizations, and experts on potential changes to the Constitution. Of particular interest for the hearing today, are the findings from the Constitutional Revision and Updating Committee.

On June 23, 2017, Dennis Mulvihill issued his final report to the Co-Chairs of the Committee, Representative Jonathan Dever and Senator Charleta Taveras.

“Throughout the four-and-a-half years of its existence, the committee intensely reviewed all aspects of the initiative and referendum processes, hearing from numerous interested parties, and considered a myriad of ways to improve how Ohio’s citizens can access the ballot.”

“The committee knew that no matter what we proposed, we would generate opposition. But after four-and-a-half years of study, our recommendations evolved out of the twin ideas of making the initiative and referendum processes better for petitioners and zealously protecting the rights of citizens to engage in that process.”

In that 2017 report, the commission issued its final set of recommendations for updates and improvements to the Ohio Constitution. However, it's worth noting that the recommendations made by the Commission were advisory only and did not have the force of law. Any changes to the Ohio Constitution would require approval by Ohio voters through a statewide referendum. In part, that is why we are here today.

As a Co-Chair of the Commission, I encourage this Committee to read, review and debate the merits of the full findings. In summary, amending Article II, Sections 1 to 1i, 15(G) and 17, of the Ohio Constitution

should be considered. Such an amendment would simultaneously alleviate the concerns addressed by the Resolution before this committee, and strengthen the statutory initiative, and make the processes more transparent and user-friendly.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. Jonathan Dever, Esq