

November 29, 2022

Dear Speaker Cupp and President Huffman:

We, the undersigned organizations, oppose any effort to drastically curtail the ability of citizens to successfully carry out ballot initiative campaigns. Any such effort will be met by broad opposition from diverse organizations and voters across the state.

Ohio has a time-honored tradition of citizen campaigns. Since 1912, Ohioans from across the political spectrum have utilized the right to amend our Constitution via the petition process. We are proud to live in a state that gives voters the right to direct democracy and the ability to have a real say in politics. We see no justifiable reason, after over 100 years, to suddenly make this already challenging process even harder.

Proposals like this are extremely unpopular with voters, even in more conservative states. A proposal to require a supermajority for passage was handily defeated by the voters of Arkansas just a few weeks ago, and the voters of South Dakota repudiated one in June 2022.

Ohioans are well aware that citizen-initiated ballot campaigns are not easy, requiring hundreds of thousands of verified signatures and a strict geographical distribution across at least half of Ohio's 88 counties.

The process is not overused. There hasn't been a citizen initiated ballot measure before voters since 2018. Over the past 10 years, there were only four elections with ballot measures through signature collection. In the past 50 years, there were 28 years without a citizen initiative on the ballot. Of those elections that had a ballot measure, only a handful of the elections had more than one issue for voters to consider.

This is NOT a good-government reform. Making the ballot initiative process even harder for citizens groups will have the *opposite* of the desired effect: it will make it almost impossible for anyone *except* big money special interests to successfully pass a ballot initiative in Ohio.

Even when initiatives to amend the constitution fail, they have spurred a deeper public dialogue and legislative action. Some examples:

- Voters defeated the pro-marijuana citizen initiative in 2015, but the campaign raised awareness and support for medical marijuana. The following year, the Ohio General Assembly passed legislation to legalize marijuana for medical treatment.
- Citizens groups were in the process of collecting signatures for an anti-gerrymandering ballot initiative in 2017. As a result of their efforts, the legislature was prompted to negotiate with the citizens groups and put forth a bipartisan proposal. Voters approved this congressional redistricting reform proposal in May 2018.
- Voters defeated the Drug Relief Act in 2017, but attention to the issue prompted the state to begin investigating middle brokers ripping off the system and costing Ohio consumers millions of dollars

We ask you to reject any proposal that would take power away from the voters. This type of proposal is unpopular with voters and rigs the game against Ohioans. We deserve better.

Thank you for considering this letter.

cc: Secretary of State Frank LaRose, members of the Ohio General Assembly, and Ohio Press Corps.

ACLU of Ohio
AFSCME Council 8
All Voting is Local Ohio
Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc.
Between the Waters
Black Environmental Leaders Association
Black Lives Matter Cleveland Inc.
Black, Out and Proud
CAIR-Ohio
Campbell Education Association
Capital District (Ohio Education Association)
Central Ohio African American Chamber of Commerce
Char and Chuck Fowler family foundation
Cleveland Bi+ Network
Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio (COHHIO)
Columbus Urban League Young Professionals
Common Cause Ohio
Communications Workers of America D4
Crazy Faith Ministries
Cuyahoga County Progressive Caucus
DSA-Cleveland
East Canton Educators Association
EPIC Ensuring Parole for Incarcerated Citizens
Equality Ohio
ETC by US
Faith in Public Life
Felony REENTRY ALUMNI TRAINING INC
Fifth Christian Church Disciples of Christ
Firelands Indivisible
Gahanna Democrats and Friends

Green Environmental Coalition
H4OE
Harrison Hills Teachers' Association
HEAL Ohio
HeartbeatMovement Incorporated
Heartland Conference UCC
Heights Coalition for Public Education
Honesty for Ohio Education
Howland Local Teachers' Association
Indivisible Central Ohio
Indivisible Central Ohio - Thursday Action Subgroup
Indivisible Central Ohio East
Intercommunity Justice and Peace Center
InterReligious Task Force on Central America
Kent Environmental Council
Leadership At Its Best & Phi Beta Sigma Beta Omicron Sigma Chapter
League of Women Voters of Ohio
Licking County NAACP
Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry
National Council of Jewish Woman/ Cleveland
New Voices for Reproductive Justice
North Canton Classified Personnel Association
Northeast Ohio Action Team, ACLU
Northeast Ohio Black Health Coalition
OCSEA/AFSCME Local 11
Ohio A. Philip Randolph Institute
Ohio AFL-CIO
Ohio Alliance for Retired Americans Educational Fund
Ohio Association of Public School Employees (OAPSE-AFSCME)

Ohio Citizen Action
Ohio Coalition Against Gun Violence
Ohio Coalition To End Qualified Immunity
@ HeartbeatMovement Incorporated
Ohio Conference of Branches of the
NAACP
Ohio Conference-American Association of
University Professors (AAUP)
Ohio Education Association
Ohio Environmental Council Action Fund
Ohio Fair Courts Alliance
Ohio Families Unite Against Police
Brutality
Ohio Families Unite for Political Action and
Change
Ohio Federation of Teachers
Ohio National Organization for Women
Ohio Organizing Collaborative
Ohio Progressive Action Leaders
Ohio Religious Action Center of Reform
Judaism (RAC-OH)
Ohio Student Association
Ohio Voter Rights Coalition
Ohio Women's Alliance
Ohio Women's Alliance Action Fund
OPAWL
Opportunities Peoples Justice Leaders (Opjl)
Orange Teachers Association
PARMA E. A.
Policy Matters Ohio
Pro-Choice Ohio
Progressive Peace Coalition
ProgressNEO
Promise of Democracy Foundation
Public Education Partners- Ohio
REACH: Responding with Empathy,
Access, and Community Healing
Red Wine & Blue
Represent Justice
Rural Organizing
SEIU/District 1199, WV/KY/OH
Shaker Heights Anti Racism Coalition
Sierra Club
Single Payer Action Network Ohio
South Range Education Association
South Range Local Schools

Southeast Progressives of Franklin County
SPAN OHIO
Struthers EA
Summit Recovery Hub
Tallmadge Teachers' Association
The Black Men's Voting Collective
The Freedom BLOC
The Ohio Council of Churches
The ReSisters of Central Ohio
Theis Research & Consulting
Thrive at Life: Working Solutions
TransOhio
UAW
UFCW Local 1059
UFCW Local 75
Unitarian Universalist Justice Ohio
United Returning Citizens
United Steelworkers - District 1
Veteran Rehab and Refuge
Vote Responsibly
Westerville Progressive Alliance
Working Families Party
YWCA Greater Cincinnati