

TESTIMONY ON HB 6595 TO HOUSE ELECTIONS COMMITTEE
DECEMBER 12, 2018

Submitted by LuAnne Kozma, Charlevoix Michigan

I am opposed to House Bill 6595, which would impose severe restrictions on the ballot initiative process and deny The People the right to initiative which is guaranteed in the Michigan Constitution.

In particular, two burdensome regulations would make it extremely difficult for both the ballot question committees coordinating hundreds if not thousands of Michigan voters as circulators, and the Secretary of State:

(1) the requirement that circulators sign affidavits and file them with the Secretary of State before collecting any signatures creates a logistical nightmare whereby the SOS would have to communicate with the ballot question committee as to who filed affidavits for which campaign. This would increase costs to the State. It would also delay the process of circulators signing up for and impede and interfere with The People's ability to conduct a campaign.

And (2) the requirement that no more than 10% of signatures come from a congressional district is the State's burden to prove. A Ballot Question Committee is under no obligation to prove to the State who its signers are. That's the canvassing process that the State has a duty to fulfill. The Analysis of this bill stating there would be no costs to the State is patently false. It would indeed be very costly for the State to look up every single signer in the Michigan Qualified Voter File and determine which congressional district they live in, in order to determine the sufficiency of a petition. Sample sizes the state usually does (just 500 signatures) would not be sufficient to determine such a complicated breakdown.

In addition, requiring a legal challenge in 3 days would be nearly impossible for any group except an exceptionally well-funded one.

In effect this bill would only allow and encourage ballot initiatives that are heavily funded by outside interest groups using paid staff and hired petitioners. Such groups are the only ones that could possibly comply with such stringent and impossible requirements.

In addition the 10% requirement and affidavit requirement are unconstitutional for referendums and statutory initiatives under Article 2 Section 9.

I have recent experience as a grassroots, Michigan voter-based and Michigan voter-funded ballot question committee campaign director for the past six years.

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