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Darke County Chamber Opposes State Issue 1

Greenville – The Darke County Chamber of Commerce announced today its opposition to State Issue 1, the flawed proposal to amend Ohio’s Constitution to reduce penalties for crimes of obtaining, possessing, and using illegal drugs.

"Ohio Ballot Issue 1 was thoroughly reviewed by the Chamber Board of Directors on behalf of the membership and a resolution was signed on September 20," said Darke County Chamber Chairman Perry Walls. "Our resolution states opposition to Issue 1 and encourages a NO vote."

"The Darke Chamber has moved to oppose Issue 1 because we believe changing the Ohio Constitution is an inappropriate means of addressing the important issues this ballot initiative wishes to solve," stated Chamber President Sharon Deschambeau. " Issue 1 will not help our chamber member businesses or our communities."

"No matter your perspective, the issues at stake in Issue 1 are complicated," said Deschambeau. "The Chamber is opposed to placing this issue on the ballot to amend the Ohio Constitution versus having it move through the normal legislative process in the Ohio General Assembly. Legislators should have the opportunity to discuss and debate the issues."

The Darke County Chamber joins a growing list of Ohio organizations that oppose Issue 1 including the Ohio Chamber of Commerce.

“Ohio employers currently face a growing problem of building a talented and productive workforce, and many of them can’t find enough workers who can pass a pre-employment drug test,” said Andrew E. Doehrel, Ohio Chamber president and CEO. “ As Chief Justice Maureen O’Connor and others have pointed out, Issue 1 could increase the prevalence of drugs and drug abuse in our state by instituting some of the most lenient drug crime laws in the nation.”

Ohio Supreme Court Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor said the measure "will have catastrophic consequences for our state."

"We could easily become a magnet for substance abuse activity because there will be, in effect, very little consequence to engaging in such behavior," she said in a statement released at the end of August. "A drug offender caught with less than 20 grams walks away with no possibility of jail time. Since the lethal dose of fentanyl is just 2 milligrams (one-thousandth of a gram), 19 grams of fentanyl is enough to kill approximately 10,000 people."

Justice O'Connor stated that if Issue 1 passes, an offender charged with possession of 19 grams of fentanyl would automatically get probation and could only be charged with a misdemeanor.

According to the ballotpedia.org Campaign Finance report, as of July 31, 2018, the backers of State Issue 1 include wealthy, out-of-state special interest groups that have poured over \$4 million dollars into Ohio. There was one ballot measure committee registered in support of Issue 1—the Ohio Safe and Healthy Communities Campaign. The committee received \$4.86 million, with the largest contributions from Open Society Policy Center (\$1.5 million), Chan Zuckerberg Advocacy (\$1.0 million), and the Open Philanthropy Project Action Fund (\$1.0 million). The committee spent \$4.51 million.

Ohio Issue 1 is a petition-initiated constitutional amendment that would reduce penalties for crimes of obtaining, possessing and using illegal drugs. If passed, Issue 1 will implement changes that would significantly impact Ohio's prison and criminal justice systems.

The Darke County Chamber will host "Good Morning Darke" on October 12, 7:30 a.m.-9:00 a.m., at the Brethren Retirement Community Brick Room to discuss Issue 1 and how it will impact Darke County. Program speakers are Darke County Common Pleas Judge Jonathan Hein and Darke County Sheriff's Office Chief Deputy Mark Whittaker. Reservations are required. For additional event information visit the chamber website at darkecountyohio.com or contact the chamber office at (937) 548-2102.

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