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Proponent Testimony on Substitute Senate Bill 135  
House Finance Committee  
May 16, 2018

Chairman Smith and members of the House Finance Committee,

During Secretary Husted's first public address as Ohio Secretary of State in 2011, he raised the important issue of replacing the aging voting equipment owned and maintained by Ohio's 88 county boards of elections. Since then, two presidential elections have passed and a third is just two short years away.

While we are confident that the storage, maintenance, and operating procedures used by the boards of elections will ensure that these systems remain secure and accurate through the 2018 election cycle, Ohio's leaders must act soon to ensure an orderly transition to newer equipment well before the 2020 Presidential General Election.

Most of Ohio's current voting equipment – precinct count optical scan (PCOS) systems and direct recording electronic (DRE or touchscreen) voting machines – was purchased in 2005 and 2006 largely through one-time federal funds as a result of the Help America Vote Act (HAVA). Though Congress has not appropriated all of the funds that HAVA authorized, it is unlikely that the federal government will do so.

While Congress imposed certain specifications on voting technology in order to receive federal funds, the state placed many of these requirements and more into state law (e.g., prohibition on central tabulation of ballots, addition of a voter verified paper trail on DRE machines, etc.). As such, the state should be an ongoing partner in paying for replacement systems.

Secretary Husted applauds Senator LaRose in his efforts to provide a funding plan to replace Ohio's aging voting technology in Substitute Senate Bill 135. Swift action to approve this legislation is necessary to ensure there is ample time for the procurement, testing, and implementation of equipment in advance of the 2020 Presidential Election cycle. As stated in a previous letter to the General Assembly, it is important that updated voting systems are implemented in time for the 2019 General Election so that elections officials and voters alike are not using new voting equipment for the first time in 2020.

As a longtime advocate of upgrading Ohio's voting systems, Secretary Husted supports Substitute Senate Bill 135 and urges the committee to pass this important legislation as soon as possible.