



**Shantiel Soeder, Election Administrator
Cuyahoga County Board of Elections
Senate Bill 44 Proponent Testimony
House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee
Wednesday, November 29th, 2017**

Chairman Blessing, Vice Chair Reineke, Ranking Member Clyde, and members of the Government Accountability and Oversight Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony for Senate Bill 44.

My name is Shantiel Soeder and I am the Election Administrator at the Cuyahoga County Board of Elections. Our agency processes campaign finance reports for offices in 59 municipalities, 31 school districts, and 18 judicial jurisdictions, as well as 13 county offices. In 2016, 1,137 filings were processed, and over the last five (5) years, the average number of filings processed equates to 1,425 per year.

Currently, Ohio Law does not allow county boards of elections to permit electronic filing of campaign finance reports, even on a voluntary basis. Anyone interested in finding specific donor or expenditure information in local elections is required to manually look over hard copies of handwritten campaign finance reports. In 2007, we began posting scanned copies of audited reports to our website. While this did expand public access to local campaign finance reports in our county, the process is still cumbersome as each individual report filed is provided as a separate pdf document and reviewers do not have the ability to search the contents of the reports.

Reforming Ohio's campaign finance law to permit the electronic filing of campaign finance reports with county boards of elections will provide easier access for candidates and committees to file their reports and allow boards of elections to employ modern technology, lessening the burden of excessive paperwork for staff. Most importantly, this bill will provide increased transparency for the public by expanding public access to information contained within campaign finance reports. Electronically filed reports would be accessible through the Secretary of State's current online database for campaign finance. The Secretary of State's system allows for anyone to quickly and easily search individual donors, donations, expenditures, or loans, simply by entering a last name or a portion of a campaign committee's name.

The State of Ohio has made great strides in recent years in increasing online access to state and local government checkbooks. Ohio's voters deserve to know who is providing funds to local candidates and campaigns that are seeking their votes.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to testify this morning. I would be happy to answer any questions.