

To: House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee

From: Camille Wimbish, Ohio Voter Rights Coalition

Re: Interested Party Testimony S.B. 21

Date: May 14, 2018

My name is Camille Wimbish and I am testifying on behalf of The Ohio Voter Rights Coalition, a network of non-partisan voter advocates committed to modern, secure and accessible elections. We are providing interested party testimony today because we have concerns with SB 21 in its current form.

This legislation permits voting locations using electronic poll books to reduce the minimum number of poll workers from four to two. We acknowledge that electronic poll books can improve the efficiency of the voter check in process, which is why we testified in support of funding for e-poll books back in 2015. That being said, there is a natural learning curve when we introduce new technology. We propose the following amendments to provide greater voter confidence that polling locations will be adequately staffed and prepared in the event that poll workers have difficulty using the machines or the technology fails:

1. Delay the implementation date until after the 2018 Election. Boards of Elections have only recently begun using electronic poll books. Many counties only began using them one year ago. This includes Butler, Cuyahoga, Columbiana, Franklin, Lucas, Portage, Seneca, Stark, Trumbull and Washington counties, among others, which began using e-poll books in 2017. We recommend waiting to implement this legislation until after poll workers have more training and experience using the technology. Boards should delay poll worker reductions at until after assessing how electronic poll books worked and affected poll worker staffing for the November 2018 general election.

When Hamilton County implemented e-poll books for the first time in 2015, there were widespread problems and long lines, such that polling places were ordered to stay open an additional 90 minutes¹. A post-election report ordered by Secretary Husted, showed that 84% of Hamilton County polling places experienced an implementation problem with the e-poll books.² Cuyahoga began

¹ Dayton Daily News, [Report: Eight of 10 polling locations had problems](#), December 11, 2015.

² *Id.*

using e-poll books for the first time in May 2017. By reports, that implementation went smoothly³. It bears repeating that Cuyahoga and most other counties have not yet used e-poll books for a high volume election.

2. Require county boards of elections to submit an Election Administration Plan outlining how e-poll books will affect staffing needs. For several years, Boards of Elections have been submitting election administration plans (EAPs) to the Secretary of State detailing how they have prepared for the election, including poll worker recruitment, voting machine allocation and security. This requirement should be codified as it is an effective tool election planning for contingencies. E-poll book content should include, at a minimum, consideration of the number of voters assigned to the polling place, whether there has been a recent change in polling places, expected Election Day turnout, and whether that polling place has experienced problems or long lines in the past. Having a concrete and thoughtful planning process for reducing poll worker staffing when using electronic poll books will instill greater voter confidence and make Boards of Elections better equipped to prevent long lines in the event technology fails.
3. Permit the staffing reductions based on population. We suggest making staff reductions optional for county boards of elections with fewer than 100,000 registered voters. Smaller counties may require fewer poll workers to service voters, which would result in a significant cost-savings. However, in larger and more diverse counties there is more transience, poll worker reductions could have a negative impact. If there are only two poll workers available in a busy polling location, disabled voters and voters with limited language proficiency may not receive needed support.

For all of the reasons mentioned above, we urge you to amend SB 21. Thank you for your consideration.

Camille Wimbish
Director, Ohio Voter Rights Coalition

³ Cleveland.com, "Cuyahoga County voters use electronic poll books for first election: So far, so good" May 2, 2017.