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2nd Ohio Senate District

Sponsor Testimony for Senate Bill 52

House Finance Committee

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Chairman Oelslager, Vice-Chairman Scherer, and Ranking Member Cera, I appreciate the opportunity to address you, and the other members of the Finance Committee, about my legislation, Senate Bill 52. SB 52 will establish the Ohio Cyber Reserve, which will be capable of deterring, mitigating and remedying cyber-attacks on our local governments, businesses, critical infrastructure and citizens. The bill will also set into law a long-needed requirement of post-election audits that will provide voters with the confidence they require to know their votes are properly counted. It will also allow for county boards of elections to be better prepared for cyber-attacks, both foreign and domestic.

Because the bill has two main parts, I would like to highlight each separately:

Cyber Security

The Ohio Cyber Reserve will establish four regionally based Cyber Response Teams (CRTs). Each team will consist of 10 cyber security experts. After that, the size will be determined based on the need of the State and interest of volunteers. The Ohio Cyber Reserve will use the same mechanism utilized by the Ohio National Guard to respond to natural disasters under State Active Duty. A local mayor, elected official or private business will contact the Governor's office if they are unable to handle a cyber-security threat with their resources alone. The Governor's office will assess the request and, if needed, authorize the Ohio National Guard to activate the Cyber Reserve.

Prior to activation, all civilian participants will train together as cohesive teams and obtain all necessary certifications and clearances. While in training status, the Ohio Cyber Reserve will provide outreach, training, and educational opportunities to local partners. This is possible with the help of the Ohio Cyber Range, an online workforce development and training tool jointly developed by the Ohio Cyber Collaboration Committee (OC3) and deployed by the University of Akron and University of Cincinnati.

Additionally, the Cyber Reserve Team will perform security assessments to eligible governmental entities and critical support to assist in identifying cyber vulnerabilities.

When activated, the Ohio Cyber Reserve will adhere to the standards established by the Ohio Code of Military Justice and will be provided appropriate and predetermined immunity with the exception of willful and wanton misconduct for the cadre volunteers. This legislation not only provides the authority for the Adjutant General's Department to mitigate and fight cyber-attacks here at home but is a model for National Guards across the country.

And as all of you know, I am testifying before this committee because there is an appropriation in the bill. Quite simply, the money we are asking for will be used for expenses related to the establishment and operation of the Ohio Cyber Reserve.

Post-Election Audits, Election Cyber-Defense

Election security is obviously important to everyone here and I am interested in making sure our elections are as secure as possible. So after a conversation with Secretary of State Frank LaRose, I decided to sponsor this bill to further what he accomplished during his time in the Senate.

Post-election audits provide the certainty voters need to know their votes are counted. Unfortunately, audits are currently not required by law, only at the directive of the secretary of state. This bill will make audits a statutory requirement for at least three elections in each county, each year and provide Ohioans with greater confidence in their electoral system.

The bill also puts a greater emphasis on election security. In January 2017, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security named election infrastructure as a part of our nation's critical infrastructure. The addition of a Chief Information Security Officer in the Secretary of State's office will help provide opportunities for local boards of elections and the state to be more resilient to attacks, and better prepared to respond when they happen.

SB 52 passed unanimously both in the Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee and on the Senate Floor, where over 20 co-sponsors were added. A couple weeks ago, the bill earned unanimous support from the House Transportation and Public Safety Committee.

Ultimately, this legislation will better protect Ohioans from devastating cyber-attacks and give them more confidence that our elections are secure.

Chairman Oelslager, thank you for giving me time to discuss the legislation and I would be happy to answer any questions the members of the committee may have.