

“Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chair Stephens, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the State and Local Government Committee,

Thank you for reading my testimony today. As a retired healthcare administrator and executive, I am writing in opposition to specific provisions of HB 680 which create unnecessary barriers to voting.

Here are my talking points about this bill:

as a former healthcare professional, I am grateful that this bill creates a process for holding the election virtually if a public health crisis makes in-person voting dangerous. But some provisions will create barriers to voting that disproportionately affect low-income voters, many of whom are people of color.

1. At this time, the most important thing Ohio legislators can do to restore peace is to strengthen trust in the democratic process, in particular, that every citizen has a voice and their voice counts through their vote.

2. Elements of the bill that need to be changed:

Shortening by a week - for all elections - the period for requesting an absentee ballot

The provision barring the Secretary of State from mailing unsolicited absentee ballot request forms. The Secretary of State has mailed absentee ballot request forms to voters in previous General Elections! Why take this service away?

The bill instructs him to mail a postcard notifying all voters of procedures in the case of a virtual election, but voters still have to obtain or download, print, and apply postage to the absentee ballot request form.

This is an unnecessary extra step, wasting time and complicating the process.

With libraries closed and many voters lacking transportation or computers, this barrier will disproportionately affect low-income voters.

The provision banning the Secretary from applying pre-paid postage on absentee ballot request forms or absentee ballots themselves. This prohibition creates an unnecessary barrier for the poor.

Also, the bill prevents the Secretary of State from using federal funding to pay return postage for ballot applications and ballots.

Instead, I ask the Committee to:

Use the law to authorize the Secretary to receive postage-paid absentee ballot applications and ballots. The Secretary of State supports this

Allow voters to submit online absentee ballot applications.

Establish multiple early vote centers and secure ballot drop boxes per county

Thank you, kindly for reviewing and considering a favorable reaction to these proposed changes.

Sincerely,

Lawrence W. James

President, CEO & Principle Consultant

CultureDrivers