

Chair Wiggam, Vice Chair Stephens, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the House State and Local Government Committee, my name is Alana Jochum, Executive Director of Equality Ohio, and I submit this testimony in strong opposition to HB680.

Equality Ohio worked tirelessly during the primary election to make sure that LGBTQ Ohioans have access to the polls for the recent primary election. We worked tirelessly to get a hold of our members on the phone. When we couldn't do that, we texted them, and even emailed them. So concerned were we with access to voting that we ran an extensive social media campaign to make sure our contacts had the information they needed to participate in the election.

We know from our work on the ground that the **turnout in the primary election was incredibly low** and that thousands of Ohioans were unable to have their voices heard. This bill would make that process even more difficult by further restricting voters' access to the polls by limiting the ability of the Secretary of State to provide absentee ballot applications to voters, restricting the time available to vote under normal circumstances, and ignoring the bipartisan suggestions that have been made by coalitions across the state.

LGBTQ Ohioans already face greater barriers to voting than other groups. For example, we have worked with transgender people who have been told they have insufficient identification after a name change; and we have heard from others who have experienced even more blatant discrimination. We should be eliminating these hurdles and make voting more accessible for Ohioans.

This bill does not do that. It does the opposite.

Equality Ohio strongly opposes HB680. Rather, we suggest a five-point strategy to guard our elections from future threats this November.

1. Allow multiple in-person early voting centers per county. This lets voters respect social distancing if they choose or if they have a particular medical vulnerability. These centers should remain open on Election Day.
2. Fully fund all 88 county Boards of Election with an emphasis on supporting educational and physical resources for a vote-by-mail election if necessary.
3. Require Boards of Elections to create Election Administration Plans every year. These plans should include emergency planning with communications and education. In addition, plans should include resource allocation for poll workers, election equipment, and health needs.
4. Allow absentee voters to designate voting powers to a representative beyond immediate family members to transport their absentee ballots. In addition, absentee ballots should be allowed to be dropped off at *any* county polling location on Election Day, ballots

should be received up to ten days after, and a permanent absentee list should be established. Count all ballots received up to ten days after Election Day, even if the postmark is missing, and create a permanent absentee list.

5. Last, and this is incredibly important, enable voters to request absentee ballots online. In our work, we talked with exhausted polling workers, exhausted board of elections employees, and confused Ohioans. This change alone would have significantly helped ease the process for access ballots for Ohioans.

Please oppose HB 680 in its current form, and instead, advance reforms as outlined above.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alana Jochum". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Alana Jochum  
Executive Director, Equality Ohio