

TO: Ohio House of Representatives State and Local Government Committee
FROM: Rev. Joel L. King, Jr.
DATE: June 3, 2020
RE: Opposition to HB 680

Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chair Stephens, Ranking Member Kelly, and Members of the House State & Local Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony in opposition to House Bill 680 ("HB680"). My name is Reverend Joel King.

Fighting for civil rights and voting rights is in my blood. I am here today because I believe HB 680 is a blatant attempt to roll back the voting rights gains that we have won over the years. I had hoped that we were well beyond the days of Jim Crow when Black voters had to jump through a series of impossible hoops just to be able to vote. But sadly in this primary election, we saw voters who had to sit on the sidelines because they lacked printers and postage to be able to request their ballots. HB 680 puts up unnecessary roadblocks to vote by mail, by ending the Secretary of State's successful practice of sending vote by mail applications- a service that has been provided to voters in even-year elections since 2012. Why on earth would we make it harder for voters to participate – particularly during a pandemic?

I am also here today because I am outraged by a provision in HB 680 that would end Souls to the Polls. Souls to the Polls is an important tradition in the Black community and it anchors our work to educate and inspire our members to vote. Cutting the last weekend of early voting, and Souls to the Polls in particular is a full-frontal attack on voting rights for the African American community.

HB 680 is simply unacceptable. We can and must do better for voters. In these challenging times voters shouldn't have to choose between their health and their right to vote. While mailing a postcard to voters may have been a palatable workaround for Ohio's scrambled primary, it's far from best practice. For future elections we should mail postage paid applications to all registered voters, and allow voters to request absentee ballot applications online.

I stand ready to answer any questions you may have.