

June 3, 2020
Representative Wiggam
Chairperson, House State And Local Government Committee
1 Capitol Square
Columbus, OH 43215

RE: Opposition to HB 680

Dear Chairman Wiggam and members of the committee,

My name is Abby Lefton, I am a resident of Cincinnati, Ohio, District 1, I just finished my freshman year of college, and I want to tell you about what a typical day of college looks like for me, and I'm sure many of my peers.

I leave my dorm at 8am and get back at 8pm. I work 2 jobs as I have student loans that require monthly payments, I have 5 classes which you can find me running across campus to get to, and I have time for 1-2 meals a day in between all of that.

When time is limited, you must prioritize tasks. But here's a tough question for you. In November when my options are eating a meal, doing school work, or voting, which would you consider a priority? If you choose voting, then why is HB680 not treating it as such?

One thing I believe we can all agree on is that voting should be safe and simple. Just as a pop quiz can throw even the most confident student off their game, a change in voting procedure or deadlines such as the ones layed out in this bill, will lead to a significant amount of students to lose their right to vote, maybe in their first election due to shortening the window to request a ballot. When convincing students to vote in the first place is already an uphill battle, further complicating the process is just the pop quiz that will tank their grade.

I am not going to stand up here and give the poor college student talk, but for a minute, I am going to try and give you a glimpse into how not having access to either an online absentee application or the availability to consider pre-paid postage is significant to me and my peers. Although there are request forms in places like Kroger or the Library, during the last election I did not have access to any of those places due to a mix of lack of transportation, time, or facilities in my area. To get the request form I had to first go to a school printer and pay to print on the school paper. I do not have access to free printing. Next, I had to go to the school post office which is closed during my off hours which resulted in waiting multiple days until the weekend when I was free to go in and pay for an envelope and stamp to send it out.

Or, you could mail me a form, I'll mail it back, I'll vote and be on my way. We live in a world that is more and more time-constrained, we need to be looking for ways to make vital tasks like voting easily accessible.

On the other end of the spectrum, my Grandmother who is currently on lockdown in her senior living home, faces a real possibility of being disenfranchised. She has voted in every election since she became eligible and if the "failsafe" plan outlined in this bill would go into place, she would not be able to vote as she does not have access to a printer or even internet. This is true for a vast population of senior citizens in Ohio.

If absentee request forms were sent out instead of the post cards notifying people of the switch to absentee, as proposed in the bill, and the Secretary of State was not prohibited from pre-paying return postage for any request forms or ballots, as proposed in the bill, it would significantly increase voter turnout, especially of students. With Ohio's last primary showing a historically low turnout and almost 200,000 absentee ballots uncounted, we must make sure we get the next one right.

Please act to make voting safe and simple for Ohioans -- by allowing online absentee ballot requests, fully funding vote-by-mail and local boards of elections, additional early vote centers with safe drop-off boxes, and recruiting adequate poll workers.

I hope I can rely on you, who needless to say rely so heavily on the very vote this bill attempts to restrict. Thank you

-Abby Lefton