

## Written testimony in opposition to HB 680

Name: Ariel Miller

Address 3732 Congreve Avenue, Cincinnati, Ohio 45213

Telephone: 513-236-9872

email: [arielmillerwriter@gmail.com](mailto:arielmillerwriter@gmail.com)

Dear Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chair Stephens, Ranking Member Kelly, and 11 Members of the Local Government Committee,

I am writing in strong opposition to elements of HB 680 that create new, needless barriers to voter participation, particularly for the poor, many of whom are people of color.

I am a white, Christian, and upper-middle-class grandmother who is passionately committed to the American value that all people are created equal. I want our participatory democracy to work, grounded in the trust of all citizens that their voice can be heard through their vote.

In this time of national trauma over police-community relations, **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 equal access to the vote and that their vote counts.**

**This bill has several provisions that will make voting more difficult, particularly for African-Americans.** By including the provisions I list below, the bill would significantly undermine the tremendous progress Gov. DeWine has made during the pandemic to build trust in state government and its commitment to the safety of all citizens, through his tireless work asking all Ohioans to work together and showing them that their efforts have profound impact in making everyone safer.

**Here are the provisions that I urge you to remove:**

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

- **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 the Secretary of State 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.

- **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.

- **Forbidding the Secretary of State from using federal funding to pay return postage for ballot applications and ballots.**

**Instead, I ask the Committee to:**

- **Authorize the Secretary of State to send postage-paid absentee ballot applications and ballots to Ohio registered voters.** The Secretary of State supports this.
- **Allow voters to submit online absentee ballot applications.** This saves voters and the state time and money on postage.
- **Establish multiple early vote centers and secure ballot drop boxes per county**

I have a graduate degree in public health from Johns Hopkins, and I commend you for preparing an alternative election process to prevent exposure to disease, but this bill has significant flaws that will undermine faith in the democratic process.

Thanks very much for reading and considering my concerns.