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House State and Local Government Committee  
House Bill 680 – Written Interested Party Testimony

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Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chair Stephens, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the House State and Local Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written interested party testimony on House Bill 680.

In Ohio, the administration of elections is a responsibility that rests with county governments in partnership with the state. County commissioners are committed to supporting the work of county elections officials to conduct elections which are free, fair and respectful of limited taxpayer resources. Counties have a significant budgetary obligation to county boards of elections, so the efficient administration of elections is a high priority for CCAO members.

House Bill 680 establishes a mail-in election contingency process during times of public health emergencies. It also makes certain changes to absentee voting and directs the Secretary of State's use of federal CARES Act funds.

CCAO supports the efficient usage of taxpayer resources to administer smoothly-run elections. Thus, CCAO echoes many of the Ohio Association of Election Officials' recommendations to strengthen HB 680 and improve Ohio's election process:

- Remove from HB 680 the postcard mailing requirement to every registered voter as part of a mail-in election contingency plan. Such a process increases voter confusion and leads to increased workload and expense for boards of elections.
- Retain the ability for the Secretary of State to mail absentee ballot requests to all registered voters, postage prepaid. This proven process helps to reduce lines on Election Day.
- The absentee ballot request deadline should be the Tuesday before the election to allow adequate time for voters to receive and return ballots.
- Allow for absentee ballot requests to be made online, which would reduce the workload for local boards of election.

CCAO members are also keenly interested in how COVID-19 may impact the mechanics of election administration this fall. Regardless if votes are cast in-person or via mail only, the pandemic will impact how local boards of elections conduct their operations. Purchases of personal protective equipment for poll workers and additional technology and equipment to handle high mail volumes are anticipated costs. While Ohio received \$12.9 million in federal CARES Act funds for election purposes, the total



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cost for COVID-19-related expenses remains unknown and potentially large. Costs in excess of these funds will likely be paid by local officials. These potential expenses would come at a time of deeply diminished county revenues. This issue remains a concern that counties are watching closely, and counties plan to seek additional federal and state assistance to offset these increased costs.

Counties will continue to work in partnership with local elections officials to ensure safe, free and fair elections this fall. COVID-19 has presented counties with many challenges thus far, and the administration of elections is unfortunately not immune from COVID's impact.

Thank you for the opportunity to share counties' recommendations for HB 680 and county perspectives regarding election administration this fall. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact CCAO.