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June 2, 2020

Opponent Written Testimony, HB680

From: Michael M. Lederman, MD and Colleagues (listed below)  
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June 2, 2020

To: Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chair Stephens, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the House State and Local Government Committee

As Infectious Diseases and Public Health professionals, we write in strong opposition to HB680 which, if passed will put the lives of Ohio voters at risk in November

The best data available indicate that COVID-19 will not disappear by the time of the November election. Ohio must put health first - as our governor has throughout this pandemic - and we all must do what we can to protect our citizens so we may exercise our rights to vote safely. By complicating the application process, by not offering on line application for ballots, and forbidding postage paid applications and ballots (even though the funding would be federal), there is no question that HB680 will decrease the number of voters who choose to vote by mail, thereby making in-person voting their only remaining option. Yet it is our professional opinion that if in-person voting increases, more voters and poll workers will be exposed to infected persons, many will acquire infection and some will die. We understand that in-person voting is necessary for some voters and is considered desirable by others. However, unnecessarily swelling the numbers of such voters by putting hurdles in the way of absentee voting, will spread infection, cause needless deaths and slow the return of Ohio to normalcy and economic solvency.

We must do everything we can to expand the ability of our citizens to vote by mail (VBM). Instead of restricting VBM, the State & Local Government committee should consider measures to maximize it (e.g. postage paid applications and ballots, authorizing on line applications, tracking down and notifying voters with changed addresses, and distributing secure drop-boxes for ballots).

Now is the time for careful and comprehensive planning, so that Ohio's 2020 General Election will be safe for both voters and poll workers. HB680 is ill-considered and places the health and lives of Ohio's citizens at risk.

Sincerely,

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