

Chairman Wiggan, Vice Chair Stephens, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the State and Local Government Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Mary Darner. I have made it a point to vote in every primary and general election since becoming eligible to vote. I am an older retired person whose career was in social work. I am strongly opposed to House Bill 680.

I went to the polls on March 17 at 6:30 am only to learn that the polls were closed. I found the steps to get a ballot and mail it in time to be counted very cumbersome. The Board of Elections first sent me the wrong ballot and had to send a second ballot. I think that reflects on the overwhelming difficulty the Board was having processing ballot applications and sending out ballots in a confusing primary. Though I got my ballot into the Board in time to be counted, I know there were thousands of ballots not received in time to be counted. We clearly need a simplified and clear process without the current hurdles required to access a ballot and to vote.

No voter is helped by this bill that does not allow the Secretary of State to provide pre-paid postage for absentee applications and ballots. This is ludicrous when the funds are available and the Secretary of State and Boards of Election officials support pre-paid postage. I fear that as I and other older folks increasingly need assistance for physical needs, priority will be on giving us care and not on having stamps available for voting. I also fear for the clients I have worked with who are without the privilege and wealth to have easy access to the internet, printers, and stamps to make voting easier for them. It is not right that this bill permanently reduces the amount of in-person early voting time and shortens the period of time to request a ballot to vote by mail.

As our legislators, you should be working to make elections easier on Board of Elections officials and voters. With COVID 19 still in our midst, please work on ways to encourage voting by mail and early voting. I ask that HB 680 be soundly defeated, that the Secretary of State be allowed to send out pre-paid voter forms, and that SB 191 be supported by this committee and passed by the House of Representatives.

Sincerely,
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