

Good afternoon, Chair Wiggam, Vice Chair Stephens, Ranking Member Kelly, and the members of the Ohio House State & Local Government Committee. My name is Zachery McCune and I am the Advocacy Manager at Equitas Health. Thank you for the opportunity to submit my written testimony to be entered into the record regarding my opposition of House Bill 680 – a measure that would further disenfranchise Ohio voters by limiting the opportunity to vote early in person or by mail in November’s General Election.

Equitas Health is a nonprofit, community-based health care organization that serves patients throughout Ohio and in neighboring states through a diverse set of services, including primary and specialized medical care, behavioral health care, dental care, pharmacy, HIV/STI prevention, case management, and advocacy. We are a Federally Qualified Health Center and the largest Ryan White Program provider in the state. We operate four health centers and pharmacies in Columbus, Dayton, and Cincinnati. Our mission is to be the gateway to good health for those at risk of or affected by HIV/AIDS, for the LGBTQ+ community, and for those seeking a welcoming health care home. We also believe that in being good steward of public health, we have an obligation to our stakeholders to provide them with the opportunity to register and vote – because we know that their health and our ability to provide services depends on the action taken by members of this very assembly. Members who are elected by their constituents – by our patients.

As part of our commitment to advocating on behalf of our patients and clients, we aim to empower them to be active citizens. Citizens who have the right, and the ability, to vote in every election. We find it gravely concerning that in light of an on-going public health crisis which created an additional barrier for our patients and clients to access the ballot, that House Bill 680 was introduced to further restrict said access. House Bill 680 threatens to undermine the very integrity of Ohio’s elections and risks disenfranchising vulnerable Ohioans who rely on early in-person absentee voting or absentee voting by mail to make their voices heard.

House Bill 680 reduces the time for military and non-military voters by mail by seven days, this is unacceptable. With an already strained United States Postal Service, it is not guaranteed that a voter will be able to receive their ballot and return it to their respective board of elections with enough time to meet this rigid and unforgiving deadline. Many Ohioans are struggling to take care of themselves and their family members – with high unemployment and strained schedules – it is irresponsible to restrict the amount of time Ohioans have to vote through absentee measures to a mere 7 days. Additionally, as previously mentioned we at Equitas Health are direct service providers and have a duty to uphold standards of public health. We are concerned by this bill’s inclusion of an unworkable emergency contingency plan for elections that would force us to replicate April’s primary.

In conclusion, House Bill 680 threatens to undermine the ability of Equitas Health patients and clients to participate in upcoming election in a manner that is both safe and accessible. We strongly oppose House Bill 680 and ask that you stand by Ohio voters and reject this proposed legislation. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony to be entered into the record regarding my opposition to House Bill 680.

Zachery McCune

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