

**H.B. 680 Opposition Testimony by Shradha Parekh, The Ohio State University Student**  
**Ohio House Committee on State and Local Government**

**June 3, 2020**

My name is Shradha Parekh and I am a current senior at The Ohio State University, studying Public Policy and Women's Studies. As a college student who was able to see first hand the complications associated with the recent Ohio Primary Election given the current COVID-19 pandemic and the Stay At Home orders, I feel it is extremely crucial to ensure that we do not have a similar situation with the upcoming General Election. As many eligible Ohio voters were left disenfranchised during the Primary, I am asking that the State of Ohio pass legislation to protect voters as the public health concerns continue into the fall. H.B. 680 does not do a sufficient job of creating an accessible election, however, we must come together to find alternate legislation that more sufficiently addresses these concerns.

The Ohio 2020 Primary Election brought to light many of the barriers that have existed for voters across the state and showed that the adjustments made to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic simply exacerbated these significant disparities. Despite the efforts of voting advocates, as well as education put out by the Secretary of State's office, many voters were left with little to no knowledge of how to request their absentee ballots or vote in person at the limited polling locations in their counties.

H.B. 680 is calling to close all physical polling locations and have all Ohioans be exclusively required to vote by mail. However, within this process, voters would still need to request their own ballots and pay for postage on their own through the existing system, which has been proven to be ineffective. There is also a portion of this bill that disenfranchises military voters by reducing their timeline by seven days. Overall, it seems there H.B. 680 offers no improvements to the absentee ballot process while simultaneously taking the option to vote in person away from voters. Additionally, there have been a number of states that have already successfully passed or begun to pass legislation that addresses the disparities we saw in the Primary Elections across the country.

The main priority for the election in the fall needs to be the safety of Ohio voters and poll workers, as well as the confidence that each eligible voter is given the tools and resources they need to effectively exercise their right to vote. In order to do this, there needs to be common sense legislation passed that includes protections for Board of Elections workers and in-person

voters, expanding early voting, simplifying the vote by mail process, and several other voter access issues that H.B. 680 fails to address. For those reasons and the other points highlighted above, my testimony serves to recommend opposing this bill and instead working on legislation that can more effectively protect the Ohio General Election.