

WITNESS INFORMATION FORM

PLEASE COMPLETE THE WITNESS INFORMATION FORM BEFORE TESTIFYING

DATE: 6/3/2020

NAME: Susan Reis

ORGANIZATION: National Council of Jewish Women
(IF APPLICABLE)

POSITION/TITLE: State Policy Advocate of Ohio

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ARE YOU REPRESENTING: YOURSELF _____ ORGANIZATION X

DO YOU WISH TO TESTIFY ON
LEGISLATION (BILL NUMBER): HB 680
SPECIFIC ISSUE: _____
SUBJECT MATTER: _____

DO YOU FAVOR _____ OR OPPOSE X THE ENACTMENT OF LEGISLATION REGARDING THIS ISSUE?

PLEASE GIVE A BRIEF STATEMENT OF THE GROUNDS ON WHICH YOU FAVOR OR OPPOSE SUCH ENACTMENT:

Chairman Wiggins, Vice Chairman Stephens, Ranking Member Kelly,

Thank you for allowing me to submit testimony today. My name is Susan Reis and I am State Policy Advocate of Ohio for National Council of Jewish Women, an organization that for over 125 years has been working to improve the lives of women, children and families throughout the United States.

The 90,000 members of NCJW nationally as well as the 2,000 members and supporters in Ohio understand that voting is an important part of improving the lives of people. Through the vote, each individual has the right to express an opinion as to who will be making decisions about issues, policies and governance as well voicing approval or disapproval for issues on a ballot. For that reason, we have always considered voting issues as critical to the success of our other policies and goals.

Often, our members have voted by mail. Sometimes, that vote occurs because a member has been hospitalized. Other times, the member is out of town. Here is a story about one of our members who had intended to be home this year to vote for in the March 17 primary: She found herself unable to travel out of Florida because of her post cancer weakened immune system and the COVID-19 virus. Eight days before the original date, she pulled the application off the Board of Elections web page, filled it out and mailed it in at the main post office in the town in which she was staying. By Friday, when she still had not received the ballot, she phoned the Board of Elections to see if they had even received the application for a ballot. She was assured that it had gone out one day before, but as long as the envelope containing the ballot was postmarked March 16 or earlier, her ballot would be counted. Late on Saturday the 14, she received the ballot. She filled it and drove to the only post office

open at that time on that day, a drive of about half an hour. This was an arduous effort that not everyone would go through.

But, if proposed HB 680 passes, it would make it impossible for someone in a similar situation to this member to vote. HB 680 retains the multi-step process that requires people to request an absentee application, complete it, return it, wait for a ballot, complete it and return it—and pick up the tab for the postage. And, the request would have to be made ten days before the vote. Our member would have been out of luck, because the decision not to drive back was made nine days before the vote. Think of someone who goes into the hospital for an emergency operation five days before the vote who generally votes in person. They, too, would lose the ability vote.

Our Boards of Election need time and materials to prepare for voting. Our primary this year was chaotic and caused a lot of confusion for our citizens as well as our Boards of Election. We had almost 50% less voter turnout than at our last primary. Our Secretary of State supports sending out applications for vote by mail ballots to all citizens and allowing people to apply for a ballot via the internet saves time and money. Waiting until 60 days before an election does not give our Boards of Election enough time to prepare. There are many people who do not have postage, and getting one (or two stamps) is onerous, particularly in the event of a pandemic. We need to make it easier, not more difficult, for people to vote.

We do not have to reinvent the wheel. There are states who already use vote by mail as the primary way that voters vote. In those states they have more, not less, places to vote early in-person, and many drop boxes throughout counties instead of just one place. We should learn from these states and use their best practices.

I, on behalf of the members of the NCJW in Ohio, respectfully request you vote “no” and do not allow this bill to come out of committee. Thank you.

Susan Reis

WILL YOU HAVE A WRITTEN STATEMENT, VISUAL AIDS, OR OTHER MATERIAL TO DISTRIBUTE?

YES NO

(IF YES, PLEASE PROVIDE COPIES TO THE CHAIRMAN OR SECRETARY)

HOW MUCH TIME WILL YOUR TESTIMONY REQUIRE? _____