



**Sarah Inskeep**  
**Opponent Testimony for Ohio House Bill 680**  
**Ohio House State and Local Government Committee**  
**Wednesday, June 3, 2020**

Chairman Wiggim, Vice-Chair Stephens, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the Ohio House State and Local Government Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify in opposition to House Bill 680.

My name is Sarah Inskeep and I am the Ohio State Policy and Movement Building Director for URGE: Unite for Reproductive and Gender Equity. URGE is a reproductive justice organization powered by young people in the South and Midwest. At URGE, we recognize and work to protect and expand the human right to maintain personal bodily autonomy, have children, not have children, and parent the children we have in safe and sustainable communities.

On behalf of our staff, youth members, and statewide chapters, **I urge a no vote on House Bill 680.** This bill seeks to make Ohio's already cumbersome vote-by-mail system more difficult for voters to navigate and successfully cast their ballot – not only in November's critical election – but in elections in years to come.

House Bill 680 would send an informational postcard rather than a ballot application to eligible Ohio voters. Additionally, this bill would prohibit the Secretary of the State from using federal funding to pay for return postage ballot applications and ballots. After Ohio's confusing and dysfunctional Primary Election, resulting in just 22.65 percent of the state's registered voters casting ballots<sup>1</sup>, I can't help but wonder why some Ohio legislators are attempting to double down, rather than work to improve, the current failures of the state's vote-by-mail system? **URGE calls on Ohio legislators to work to remove barriers to the ballot box that will further disenfranchise historically marginalized voters,**

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<sup>1</sup> Ohio Primary Election Draws Turnout Below 23 Percent. Dayton Daily News. Published April 29, 2020. Accessed July 2, 2020. <https://www.daytondailynews.com/news/state--regional-govt--politics/ohio-primary-election-draws-turnout-below-percent/FGzUxU2iDoc9Nhg7VVZefL/>



**specifically young queer and trans people of color, and not to reinforce them with House Bill 680.**

Instead, URGE suggests the following policy recommendations to help safeguard the integrity of future elections and ensure broad civic participation from Ohio voters:

- ★ **Implement a process for absentee ballots to be requested online, without needing to print and mail in an application.** Through our work with young people, it was abundantly clear that many college students who were actively being displaced from their campuses as a result COVID-19, were not only confused about the process, but had very little resources and capacity to print a ballot request form or pay for stamps with such short notice.
- ★ **Extend early voting by allowing multiple in-person early voting centers in every county.** Facilities must also accommodate for proper social distancing guidelines in addition to other health measures to ensure people can vote in-person safely
- ★ **Sufficiently fund all 88 county Boards of Election with an emphasis on supporting educational resources for a vote-by-mail election.**
- ★ **Require Boards of Elections to create Election Administration Plans.** Such plans must include emergency planning with communications and clear instruction. Plans must also include resource allocation for poll workers, election equipment, and other health and safety needs.
- ★ **Allow absentee voters to designate some trusted individual and family members to transport their absentee ballots.** Absentee ballots should also be permitted to be dropped off at any county polling location on Election Day and received up to ten days after. All ballots received up to ten days after Election Day must be counted, regardless of postmarking.

In addition to these primary recommendations, URGE supports policies that would deem Election Day a national holiday, implement automatic and same-day voter registration,



lower the eligible voting age to 16-year-old, and restore voting rights to people with previous felony convictions.

Too often young queer and trans people of color are excluded from political decisions about the issues that affect their bodies, lives, and families, yet are blamed for the pitfalls of our democratic system. Young people are resilient and powerful voices that have been ignored for too long – don't allow House Bill 680 to be the latest effort to silence and shut them out of the democratic process.

Please vote no on House Bill 680 and consider the voting alternate policy recommendations above.