

HB 680 Opponent Testimony
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Chairman Wiggam, 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 Stella Shaw, and I am the Political Director for Planned Parenthood Advocates of Ohio. I am here to oppose HB 680 strongly.

A vote for this bill is saying that the 2020 Ohio Primary was a success. The 2020 Ohio Primary was an embarrassment to our right to vote, HB 680 goes further and is a disaster for our democracy and principles this country was founded on. During the Primary, we were still trying to figure out the extent of the seriousness of the COVID-19 pandemic. We have the time now to ensure that the general election will be safe and to make voting more accessible. HB 680 is moving in the wrong direction. This bill is cutting back on early voting days, making it harder to vote by mail, and making the polls more dangerous by banning health standards like social distancing or sanitation on Election Day.

Planned Parenthood is committed to helping preserve democracy and ensure that everyone has not only the right to vote but access to their ballot. Every election, we encourage everyone to vote. We are frustrated to see the barriers created by the state keep people from exercising their right to vote. We need to take away these barriers to vote and not increase them, which HB 680 does.

The confusion starting on March 16th with a postponed election and then a cancelled in-person voting. On March 25th the House changed the date from June 2nd to April 28th which caused further confusion. All of this confusion lead people not to vote and a distrust of government and the voting process. The multi-step process to request an absentee ballot caused delays and barriers for thousands of Ohioans. In the middle of a pandemic, it is hard to access a printer, internet, and even a phone in some cases. Even after you can print out your ballot request form, you have to mail it then back to the board of elections costing you the cost of an envelope and a stamp, which creates a barrier for many people. All of this has to be done ASAP to get the form into the board of elections in time to get the ballot to you, you fill it out, and then you mail it back into the board of elections.

Covid-19 is still a genuine threat to Ohioans. The probability that there will be people unable to vote in person is high. We should be making it easier for people to vote by mail not harder. We all should be encouraging folks to vote early to avoid going to the polls. We saw in Wisconsin when they failed to postpone their election six people died as a direct result. How many people are you willing to let die here in Ohio?

House Bill 680 cuts early voting opportunities for military, overseas, and in-person voters by cutting the last three days of early voting, the most popular days to vote early. While Ohioans and Americans are mourning and marching for racial justice, Ohio Republicans are trying to cut the early voting period when Black churches traditionally go to the polls.

House Bill 680 prohibits the Secretary of State from sending all voters absentee ballots, which this same legislature already allocated funding to do in last year's operating budget and has been done in Ohio since 2012. This bill is moving us backwards. This bill prohibits the Secretary of State from prepaying postage on any election mail; this forces people to have to pay to have their right to vote.

House Bill 680 would create an unfeasible emergency contingency plan that would repeat our disastrous confusing April primary. This bill doesn't only move us backwards but tries to recreate an election that we know didn't work.

We are still in the midst of a pandemic. Either we have not learned from the disastrous April primary, or this bill is purposely trying to make it hard for Ohioans to have their right to vote. Instead of purposefully making this election a confusing and move backwards, we need to implement:

- online absentee ballot requests, send all voters an absentee ballot request application
- prepay postage on all election-related mail
- protect access to early voting
- create a legitimate emergency contingency plan so that no voter is forced to choose between casting their ballot and staying healthy/alive.

For these reasons, I am urging you to vote **NO** on HB 680 and support common-sense reforms to our election laws that make voting more accessible, more efficient and encourage voter participation. Rather than making it harder to vote, you should be working to make elections easier on Board of Elections officials and voters. Make vote by mail easier, not harder. Thank you for your time.