



Testimony by Catherine Turcer on Senate Bill 107  
Before the Ohio Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee  
April 9, 2019

Thank you so much for this opportunity to testify in favor of Senate Bill 107. My name is Catherine Turcer and I am the executive director of Common Cause Ohio. I am the author of a number of studies tracking campaign contributions. Common Cause has over 1 million members and 20,175 of those are Ohioans. I'm also here on behalf of our partner, League of Women Voters of Ohio. Our organizations are committed to open accountable government, and I am here today because Senate Bill 107 significantly advances transparency in local elections.

Putting these contributions online is an important step forward because the only way that the press and the public can consider the source of contributions today is to review the information on paper at the local board of elections. Digital sunlight makes it possible for voters to easily search the reports and to look at them at their convenience.

This type of transparency helps voters by alerting them to the kinds of interests to which the candidate or elected official is most likely to be responsive. This type of transparency can help to deter corruption and avoid the appearance of corruption by exposing large contributions and expenditures. Such exposure may discourage improper pressure on candidates from contributors, plus it arms the public with information so that they can detect possible post-election special treatment.

Twenty years ago, the first bill that I advocated for was House Bill 119 of the 123<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly. Online disclosure has worked well; we have already worked out

many of the stumbling blocks that existed when the legislation was implemented. It is time that all candidates, political party committees, and PACs in Ohio file campaign contributions and expenditures online.

This legislation would be significantly stronger if electronic filing were required, rather than optional. For state legislative candidates, raising or expending more than \$10,000 triggers electronic filing. This seems like a reasonable trigger for local PACs and candidate and party committees as well. It is 2019—not 1999— and using spreadsheets for tracking contributions and expenditures is commonplace.

Contributions that are filed electronically are easily posted: without the requirement, many political actors may choose to simply opt out. SB 107 advances transparency, but I strongly encourage you to amend this bill so that it will truly provide the kind of disclosure that voters expect in 2019.

Thank you again for this opportunity to testify.