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Sponsor Testimony on Senate Bill 135
Senate Finance Committee
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Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Skindell, members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide Sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 135. This legislation would provide the necessary funding for new voting equipment and reimbursement to counties which have recently purchased new machines.

Most voting equipment is reaching the end of its operational life and will need to be replaced prior to the 2020 presidential election. The current equipment was purchased in 2005 or 2006 using federally money from the Help America Vote Act (HAVA). This onetime payment was a reaction to the 2000 presidential election where the countries election results were questioned over outdated voting methods. All over the country, states are beginning to seek funding for voting machines in preparation for the next presidential election. Ohio, like most of the country, no longer has money left over from HAVA. With a decade or more old equipment, we need to identify funding for voting equipment in order to ensure future elections are not compromised by failing machines.

Although widespread failure is not occurring, minor errors and glitches are becoming more common with each election and the long term viability of the system in place is being compromised. Voting systems are made up of many individual items, not just the voting device. Some of the equipment needed to support the voting system such as servers, printers and scanners, have been discontinued by the manufacturer and are no longer readily available. Parts that have been discontinued are becoming harder to find and thus affect the long-term viability of the system. This equipment comprises the essential infrastructure of our democracy, and it is a shared state and local responsibility to ensure that it is properly maintained.

The legislation is modeled on the approach used in HB 64 of last general assembly for the procurement of electronic poll books. The bill contains an appropriation for the Ohio Department of Administrative Services to purchase new voting equipment and also provides for reimbursement to counties which have recently purchased new equipment. The bill calls for the state to provide 80 percent of the equipment cost, while counties would fund the remaining 20 percent.

Obtaining funding for voting equipment is a top priority for the County Commissioners Association of Ohio and the Ohio Association of Election Officials. Furthermore, the Bipartisan Commission on Election Administration prioritized updating electronic voting equipment as first-generation voting machines grow obsolete—and that time has come.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.