

Proponent Testimony
Edward Leonard
SB 135

Chairman Oelslager, Ranking Member Skindell and members of the Senate Finance Committee:

My name is Ed Leonard. I am Director of the Franklin County Board of Elections and a member of the Ohio Association of Election Officials (OAEO) legislative committee. I am here today alongside my colleague Tim Ward to offer our association's support for SB 135.

As Director of the largest county in Ohio, I can tell you unequivocally that SB 135 is a desperately needed piece of legislation. We have been struggling for years to maintain our aging voting equipment. The continual challenges presented by aging hardware parts for which are difficult, if not impossible, to find and aging software that requires cumbersome steps to integrate newer system components has made ownership of our current generation of tabulating equipment unsustainable. The time to replace our voting machines is at hand, and SB 135 will make this transition possible for the voters of Franklin County and voters throughout the State of Ohio. However, rather than focus on the appropriations in SB 135 which have received much attention, I would like to spend a few moments detailing some of the other provisions of SB 135 that are equally important to local boards of elections.

The policies contained in SB 135 will result in positive outcomes for all Ohio voters, and will benefit taxpayers as well. For example, the legislation requires the Department of Administrative Services, with advice from a panel of experts, to enter negotiations with voting machine suppliers. In doing so, the legislature can be assured that they are getting the best bang for their buck. Smaller counties will receive

the benefit of state negotiated prices and be able to take advantage of state contracting policies without going through the expense of writing and evaluating requests for proposals. Like the recent procurement with electronic poll book vendors, large counties will still be able to negotiate bulk discounts off the state list price. By piggy-backing off the state negotiated agreements, all counties will be able to procure and implement systems in time for the 2019 election cycle. Indeed, SB 135 contains good, smart fiscal policies for both the state and counties of every size.

Additionally, SB 135 specifies that DAS will only enter negotiations with certified voting machine vendors. Ohio has a rigorous process for certifying voting equipment which involves both federal and state certification. This particular requirement of SB 135 ensures Ohio's boards of elections and voters that any equipment purchased meets the highest standards for accuracy, reliability and security. Again, SB 135 contains sound policies well beyond the appropriations.

Mr. Chairman, I would encourage the committee's support for this bill. I would be happy to answer any questions about my testimony, or provide more details about Franklin County's efforts to procure new voting equipment.