



**Representative Bride Rose Sweeney**  
Sponsor Testimony: House Bill 466  
House State and Local Government Committee  
December 8, 2020

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Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chair Stephens, Ranking Member Kelly, and Members of the State and Local Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 466. This legislation would modernize Ohio’s voter registration system by making the choice to register at the Bureau of Motor Vehicles and other state agencies an “opt-out” rather than an “opt-in” system.

For several decades, the federal “Motor Voter” law has designated certain public entities as voter registration agencies, such as Bureaus of Motor Vehicles across the United States. For a variety of reasons, this law has become less effective over time, and it has always left out certain groups of people. When you compare Ohio with other Midwestern states, which are all guided by the same federal law, we actually register fewer voters than our neighbors. Pennsylvania and Michigan, for example, register almost twice as many people at their BMVs than Ohio does.

House Bill 466 would make the simple but powerful switch from an opt-in system to an opt-out system at BMVs. If a citizen does not want to be registered, they may still decline. The bill would also pre-register high school students once they turn 18, unless they decline to be registered. Our current tactics for voter outreach don’t do enough to reach young people.

Not only will this legislation improve voter access and bring Ohio’s election systems into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, it will also provide administrative benefits to the state. I believe that House Bill 466 is the most commonsense and cost effective way to ensure that Ohioans are not disenfranchised by government bureaucracy. It would modernize our election infrastructure while securely and accurately maintaining Ohio’s voter rolls. Security is especially important in the digital age when bad actors are constantly seeking to infiltrate voter rolls and undermine the right to free and fair elections. This legislation would put more eligible voters on the rolls with the hope of increasing participation.

For too long, Ohio has relied on an antiquated purge process to maintain its voter rolls, which has allowed a mix of human error and corporate vendors to inadvertently disenfranchise Ohioans. In the last election alone, over 4,000 voters whose registration was purged by the supplemental process showed up on Election Day to vote. These Ohioans were only able to vote because of what’s called the APRI exception, which is set to expire at the end of 2022 when their ballots will start to be thrown out entirely. The purge process that we rely upon can inadvertently deregister anyone, from the frequent voter who has voted in every election to the infrequent voter who failed to respond to a postcard so the state thinks they’re dead. This bill offers a better way to ensure accurate voter rolls without expensive, aggressive, and error-riddled voter purges.

If this bill were enacted, future voter purges would be moot and Ohio would join a growing list of 18 states which have acted to ensure the right to vote and remove barriers to registration. This bill is about modernizing our voter rolls so that government bureaucracy and human errors are never the reason that eligible voters are unable to participate in our elections.

Thank you for providing the opportunity to testify. I look forward to any questions you may have.