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TO: House Government Oversight Committee
FROM: Kayla Griffin, Ohio State Director, All Voting is Local Action
DATE: November 17, 2022
RE: House Bill 294 Ohio Election Security and Modernization Act

To Chairman Wilkin, Vice Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Brown, and members of the House Government Oversight Committee, my name is Kayla Griffin, Ohio State Director for All Voting is Local Action. Our Organization fights for policies and legislative priorities that expand pathways to voter registration and access to safe in-person voting and vote by mail so that every voice is heard. With that, I thank you for the opportunity to submit to opponent testimony on House Bill 294.

Since our launch, All Voting is Local Action has worked in partnership with other voting rights organizations on several key Voting Rights and Election Administration initiatives in Ohio, including in-person early voting, polling place and precinct moves, provisional ballots, and the list maintenance procedure.

The 2020 election was the most secure and accurate election in Ohio's history, with a record number of voters nationwide turning out to make their voices heard. Yet, in response to such a success, the state legislature introduced HB 294 which, in its initial form, sought to limit voters' access to the ballot, while enticing us with an online ballot application portal and automated voter registration.

Unfortunately, the sub bill that was released yesterday has great potential for voter confusion, reduced access to early voting, and will inevitably add pressure to an already strained electoral system. Despite having only 24 hours to review the sub bill, some of the most concerning provisions identified are as follows:

- The implementation of an Automated Voter Registration and Verification System has been removed;
- The voter activity that would allow an elector to avoid having their registration canceled because of a BMV transaction has been removed;

- The Bill cancels early voting the Monday before Election Day, which has been widely utilized by thousands of voters throughout the years;
- It limits access to ballot drop boxes locations to only at Board of Election sites which impacts heavily populated counties and sparsely populated rural counties;
- Arbitrarily shortens the absentee ballot request period and has a shorter window allotted for paper applications than online applications; and
- Prevents any government official from providing prepaid postage and sending unsolicited ballot requests forms to voters ahead of elections.

Time does not allow me to opine over every problematic clause of this bill. And while the above mentioned provisions are not an exhaustive list of the issue, they would make accessing the ballot increasingly harder for Ohioians who are disabled, elderly, confined, and economically disenfranchised. This bill will negatively impact both rural and urban residents of our state.

HB 294, should not be pushed through without giving the public and advocates the opportunity to fully review and comment on the new provisions. Ohio lawmakers should instead pass laws that

- expand access to early voting by increasing the number of early voting centers per county,
- add additional drop boxes throughout counties,
- provide prepaid postage for ballots to be returned, and
- create an Automatic Voter Registration system.

Free and fair elections are absolutely essential to our democracy, and limiting ballot access in the name of election security stokes the lies and conspiracies that our elections are not already secure.

And so I ask, what problem are you really trying to solve with this bill? I strongly urge this committee to avoid supporting this bill and I thank you for this opportunity to share our opposition.