



## **CINCINNATI BRANCH**

*Founded in 1915*

# **National Association for the Advancement of Colored People**

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December 1, 2022  
HB294 - OPPONENT TESTIMONY  
VIA EMAIL

Greetings!

Chairman Wilkin, Ranking Member Brown and members of the House Government Oversight Committee:

My name is Joe Mallory, President of the Cincinnati NAACP. A branch of the oldest and largest civil rights organization in the country. I want to thank you for the opportunity to provide witness testimony on HB 294. I am submitting this in my capacity as an NAACP Branch President, representing hundreds of members who are taxpaying citizens and registered voters in Hamilton County.

We stand in opposition to HB 294 as introduced. Because It creates unnecessary barriers to vote.

Ohio's November 2020 election was epic and had record participation. It was the highest turnout election in the history of Ohio elections with 74% participation statewide and nearly 6 million Ohioans voting. So, I am perplexed why Ohio legislators feel the need to manipulate our state election laws. This piece of legislation will set us back. For every 3 steps forward, we seem to take 7 steps backwards. For the first time in history the early vote totals in 2020 (58.6 %) exceeded the election day totals. I'm sure the absentee turnout was out of an abundance of caution and as a matter of necessity due to COVID-19 concerns and compromised immune systems. Now we have a restrictive bill intending to roll back hours and opportunities because of the success of early voting.

Many voters that voted for the first time as absentee voters in 2020 used it to stay safe while also exercising their fundamental right, which also helped keep the pressure off the poll workers on Election Day and the volume that they would have normally had to deal with in a Presidential Election. Our Secretary of State proudly boasted that "Ohio ran one of the most successful elections ever!"

The title of this bill "Ohio Election Security and Modernization Act is a misnomer. This bill isn't living up to its title. This bill sat dormant since June 2021 and was resurrected and revised in November 2022, and after 2 weeks there are attempts to restrict the manner and opportunities in which we can participate, so that it can be expedited through the process with limited public participation.

We are opposed to any form of:

- Reduced access to early voting,
- Eliminating the Monday before Election Day
- Changing the deadline to request an absentee ballot
- Non-Citizen designations on DL and State ID cards (13 people out of nearly 6 million voters voted illegally).

These are some things that the legislature could introduce and codify that could be helpful in Election Administration such as: allowing the full capability of epoll books to be utilized to push names of absentee voters to epoll books in the precincts, (so their names are flagged as voting absentee, names are public information and other states are currently doing it), election day postmark, requiring intelligent mail barcodes on all absentee ballots by mail and work with the Post Office to insure it is known when every ballot entered into their mail stream; so all eligible ballots in by election day are counted, sending an absentee ballot application to all voters and paying the return postage, not shortening the early voting period, paying the cost of the return vote by mail ballots, true automatic voter registration (with an opt out provision), expanding drop box locations, expanding the last Saturday and Sunday Voting Hours to 8-6, online absentee ballot requests, counting all ballots inside the return envelope but outside of the ID envelope.

It is our hope that you will welcome dialogue and be respectful of the legislative process. The right to vote is our fundamental right, as well as full participation in our democracy. We urge you not to pass HB 294 out of committee in its current form and until such time that sufficient opportunity is given for robust debate.

Respectfully,

  
Joe Mallory, President  
Cincinnati NAACP