

Testimony by Trevor P. Martin  
Before the House Government Oversight Committee  
December 1, 2022

Greetings, my name is Trevor Martin, and I am a resident of Columbus, Ohio. I am a community organizer and activist who has worked for nearly two decades in both a paid capacity and a voluntary capacity within various good governance organizations, nonprofits, and several candidate and issue campaigns. It is my desire and goal to help communities identify the skills and resources within their own communities and then organize and utilize the same to create power and leverage to be a force for change and be included in the decision making and policy choices that affect their day to day lives. As legislators, I would hope that you would want the same for your communities and your constituents. I would hope that you would want an educated, informed, and engaged constituency. I would think that you would want participation—maximum participation—from our fellow citizens. However, this legislation shows otherwise. This legislation is harmful, misinformed, and erects barriers to participation and discourages engagement. This legislation will harm Ohio voters and make it more difficult to vote. This legislation is anti-democratic.

Substitute House Bill 294 is full of damaging attacks on our freedom to vote. This legislation will do nothing to improve access to the ballot in Ohio or solve any of the existing problems that create barriers to the ballot for Ohio voters. Here are just a few provisions within HB294 that are not only unnecessary but outright destructive:

- **Prohibits** the Secretary of State, Boards of Election, or any public official from sending unsolicited absentee ballot request forms.
- **Prohibits** prepaid return postage for absentee ballot requests and absentee ballots.
- **Eliminates** the last day of early voting, reallocating the lost hours during weekdays, but not during the final weekend.
- **Codifies** a confusing early voting schedule with variable weekday hours during the final week of early voting.
- **Shortens** the time for Boards to accept voted ballots— with a postmark prior to the election—from 10 days after Election Day to 7 days after Election Day (and that shorter deadline applies to overseas and military voters as well).
- **Limits** Boards of Election to 3 drop boxes, only allows them to be set up at the county board office, and only permits their use starting 28 days before an election.
- **Eliminates** curbside voting provisions that were in the original HB 294.
- **Continues** the prohibition of grandchildren dropping off absentee ballots and creates new criminal penalties for unauthorized ballot returns.
- **Requires** citizenship status to be listed on Ohio driver's licenses.

There are many ways we could improve voting and elections in Ohio: automatic registration, same day registration, multiple early vote centers, additional drop boxes and so much more. None of the unnecessary voting restrictions in Sub House Bill 294 solve any problems, they simply make it harder to vote and that is unacceptable.