

**TESTIMONY OF:
American Jewish Committee
INTERESTED PARTY**

HB 294: Enact Ohio Election Security and Modernization Act
House Government Oversight Committee

[Columbus, OH, 12/5/22] — Dear Chair Wilkin, Vice Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Brown, and members of the House Government Oversight Committee.

The American Jewish Committee thanks you for this opportunity to comment on substitute House Bill 294.

The American Jewish Committee was founded in 1906 to protect the rights of Jews in the United States and around the world. Since its founding it has been committed to the proposition that one of the best protections for Jews is a healthy democracy. It has a long tradition of supporting measures to make sure that all who are eligible to vote can do so, most notably in connection with the country's civil rights struggle. AJC has offices in Cincinnati and Cleveland.

The limited time available to us to analyze substitute House Bill 294 precludes offering a full and complete position on all the various provisions of this omnibus legislation. We approach this legislation with the firm conviction that the well-being of American democracy (and therefore the well-being of American Jews in particular) depends in the first instance on elections being easily open to all eligible voters and conducted in ways that both preclude fraud and give all voters confidence that the elections are fair, both in terms of access to the ballot and in terms of security.

This means that every provision affecting access of citizens to the ballot needs to be analyzed with two distinct lenses. One, does it make it easier or harder to vote? Does it unnecessarily exclude some group of potential eligible voters for less than substantial cause? Are there other ways of attaining the same security advantages without burdening voters?

The other lens asks not only whether the system has already been tampered with, such that the results do not truly reflect the will of those vote, but can voters have confidence that that is the state of play. It cannot be that purely hypothetical fears, ginned up by wild conspiratorial theories—of which there are many--justify restrictions that have the effect of excluding voters. Yet it also cannot be the rule that one needs to await a corrupted election before steps are taken to preserve the integrity of the poll. In making these assessments, we believe it behooves the legislature to take note of the fact that election fraud is currently fleetingly rare as best as anybody can tell. Ohio has in place many robust measures against electoral fraud.

We urge that claims that additional security measures and restrictions on the ability to vote are necessary be judged therefore with a skeptical eye. But that is not to say that all improvements are precluded, or that, even if not well grounded in fact, the fears of some that the system can be tampered with should not be acknowledged so long as that can be done without substantial cost to ease of accessibility to the ballot.

Justin Kirschner
Regional Director, AJC Cincinnati

Lee C Shapiro
Regional Director, AJC Cleveland