

Interested Party Testimony
HB 499
Ohio Association of Election Officials

Chairman Brinkman, Vice Chair Lampton and Ranking Member
Miranda:

My name is Brian Sleeth. I am Director of the Warren County Board of Elections and President of the Ohio Association of Election Officials (OAEO). OAEO is the bipartisan association representing Ohio's 88 county boards of elections.

I am here today to encourage the committee to consider an amendment to HB 499 that would add board of election members to the list of elected and appointed officials who can serve in those respective roles and still receive OPERS disability benefits.

As the vice-chair can attest from his personal experience, the demands on members of boards of elections have grown tremendously in recent years. Gone are the days when board members would show up for one meeting a month and vote on routine, noncontroversial business before quickly adjourning. Nowadays, board members are asked to grapple with complex policy issues, legal questions and an everchanging operational paradigm. It is not uncommon for board members in small counties to personally contribute numerous hours checking petitions, loading equipment for delivery to polling locations, or testing voting machines in order to augment the already lean full-time staff at those boards. Additionally, continuing education requirements for BOE members frequently require them to take personal or vacation time to attend conferences or webinars to meet their CE obligations.

As a result, we have seen enormous turnover with board members and desperately need qualified individuals to hold these positions to

provide continuity, experience and leadership to the boards. Amending HB 499 to allow OPERS disability retirees to serve on boards of elections is a small but meaningful step that the legislature can take to address this issue. Thank you for your consideration.