



**House Ways and Means Committee
HB 458 Written Opposition Testimony
Buckeye Association of School Administrators
Ohio Association of School Business Officials
Ohio School Boards Association
Ohio Township Association
December 7, 2021**

Chair Merrin, Vice Chair Riedel, Ranking Member Sobecki, and members of the House Ways and Means Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written opposition testimony on House Bill (HB) 458. Collectively, we represent public school board members, superintendents, treasurers/CFOs and other school business officials from around the state, as well as Ohio's 1,308 townships.

On behalf of our members, we write to express our strong opposition to HB 458, which would eliminate the August special election, except in cases where a special election occurs to nominate or elect a candidate for the U.S. House of Representatives.

Eliminating the August special election undermines the ability of school districts and townships, which are funded primarily through property taxes, to sustain and raise critical funding. Just six years after eliminating the February special election, HB 458 would remove yet another opportunity, down to two, for school districts and townships to ask their residents to support their students and community.

The nature of the Ohio Constitution and the state's school-funding formula forces many school districts to routinely ask their voters to simply maintain current levels of education services. Townships face similar hurdles in their ability to maintain adequate funding levels. Levies also often require voter education on the needs of the jurisdiction. Reducing their ability to do so will undoubtedly make it more difficult for school districts and townships to sustain or raise local revenues. It also will unnecessarily complicate budget and levy planning efforts and may cause fiscal instability for some jurisdictions.

Placing an issue on the August ballot is a decision not taken lightly, and it is one that should be decided by each board of education or board of trustees with their understanding of the community's needs and interest.

HB 458 also has negative implications for school districts participating in an Ohio Facilities Construction Commission (OFCC) project. The OFCC process gives districts 13 months to pass

a bond issue after the July announcement of eligible districts. This gives districts three opportunities to pass a bond issue to provide the local share of funding for their project (first in November, then May, and finally in August). Reducing this opportunity by one third will result in more districts lapsing on their OFCC funding opportunity, which means new scope and cost estimates must be set. This can translate to project delays, higher labor and supply costs, and less favorable loan terms.

Proponents of HB 458 allege that the August ballot is untransparent and does not represent the will of the electorate due to lower voter turnout and a lack of public focus on the ballot issues. We disagree. We contend that the typically fewer items that appear on the August ballot serve as a key opportunity for districts to educate voters on the levy request and the needs of the district. These off-peak election times are also not overshadowed by the bevy of candidates for office and other levy issues on a November ballot, for example.

Chair Merrin and members of the House Ways and Means Committee, we urge you to oppose HB 458. Please contact us if you have questions.

Sincerely,
Will Schwartz, Ohio School Boards Association
Katie Johnson, Ohio Association of School Business Officials
Kevin Miller, Buckeye Association of School Administrators
Marisa Myers, Ohio Township Association