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Chairwoman Gavarone, Ranking Member Maharath, and Members of the Local Government and Elections Committee, Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on SJR 6. This resolution is very simple, bringing uniformity to who can vote in our federal, state, and local elections. As it currently stands, you must be a US citizen to vote for federal and state level officeholders and issues. However, there is a potential loophole at the local level that would allow legal, noncitizens to vote in municipal or chartered county – Cuyahoga and Summit – elections. There is much case law surrounding Ohio’s home rule provision, but LSC research indicates that if municipalities, for example, amended their charters to allow noncitizens to vote, and this was challenged in court, that the court would likely rule in favor of the municipality.

My motivation for introducing this is simple: citizenship matters, and only citizens should have the vote. While I like to think of myself as a decent writer, I pale in comparison to the editors at the National Review who have provided a far more eloquent defense of requiring citizenship for voting. To quote a November, 2021 article by their editorial board:

There are good reasons why Americans have traditionally limited the vote to citizens. Citizenship is no mere formality, as anyone who has attended a citizenship ceremony can attest. It is a bond of right, responsibility, and affectation between the citizen and the nation.

Furthermore, I view this as a preventative measure. There are cities in other states that have moved to allow noncitizens to vote, the most notable of which is New York, which did so just last year, allowing 800,000 noncitizens to vote. Doing so was not without pushback, as the opposition was bipartisan, and even the mayor had reservations. While New York may have grabbed the headlines, cities in California and Maryland have extended voting to noncitizens. Fortunately, there have been similar measures to the one before you today that have been ratified with overwhelming support.

In closing, I hope that this passes with board bipartisan support and is easily resolved this November. Doubtless there will be opposition, but a question for any opponents would be this: why should noncitizens be extended the vote at the local level? For it is the answer to this question, that Ohioans will be most attuned.