

Testimony on Substitute House Bill 458
Senate Local Government and Elections Committee
December 12, 2022
Submitted by Tony D'Ambrosio

Thank you Chairwoman Gavarone, Vice Chairwoman O'Brien, Ranking Member Maharath, and the members of the Senate Local Government and Elections Committee for the opportunity to provide opponent testimony on House Bill 458 (HB 458). My name is Tony D'Ambrosio and I'm an actively engaged voter from current State House District 28 (the Great 28) and State Senate District 8 in Hamilton County, Ohio.

The voting process should be safe, secure, accessible and efficient. What problem are we solving with House Bill 458? This bill will not serve to facilitate any of these aspects of the voting process but will put up more barriers and expend further resources.

Requiring a photo ID to vote is an unnecessary obstacle to voting for those without the means or desire to have a driver's license or state ID card. Under HB 458 voters will lose the freedom to register to vote and vote with alternate forms of ID such as a utility bill, government document, or paycheck. Voters will be forced to provide a strict photo ID to vote, whether voting by absentee ballot, in person on Election Day, or provisionally. Voters will lose the freedom to vote provisionally with the last four digits of their social security number outside of a religious exemption. In turn, decreased accessibility and efficiency.

What level of fraud are we seeing with the use of current forms of acceptable identification? In reviewing Hamilton County Board of Election meeting minutes from November elections in 2020 and 2021, election officials addressed Election Anomaly Reports involving potential cases of voter fraud. Overall, those cases involved a fraction of a percent of ballots cast. None addressed in those years included voter identification fraud. None. HB 458 will have no apparent positive impact on election security for those in one of Ohio's largest counties.

What is the financial cost of implementing the proposals found in HB 458? There has not yet been a fiscal impact analysis published so it is difficult to know HB 458's cost. Providing free IDs is going to cost taxpayers to address a statistically insignificant problem. Expending resources on a near non-existent problem is financially irresponsible. What it does appear to fund is a barrier to the ballot. While the ID may be free, how will we advise those without mandated ID that this service is both required and available? How will we facilitate the process of all voters without mandated ID in getting that form of identification? A variety of resources will need to be expended on the part of the Ohio government and individual voters. Even if ID is offered for free, voters will incur numerous other costs (such as paying for birth certificates) to apply for a government-issued ID. Underlying documents required to obtain ID cost money, a

significant expense for lower-income Ohioans. The combined cost of document fees, travel expenses and waiting time will have the greatest impact on those of low income and lesser means. The travel required is often a major burden on people with disabilities, the elderly and those in rural areas without access to a car or public transportation. So, higher potential costs all around.

Voters will be punished by slow mail delivery and lose the ability to have postage for their absentee ballot requests and ballots prepaid by the government. Absentee ballots will be thrown out if not received by the close of polls on Election Day. This shorter deadline applies to overseas and military voters, potentially disenfranchising military members in other countries. Voters will lose access to drop boxes by limiting Boards of Election to a single drop box location, open during business hours only and limited to the early voting period. This bill will eliminate the Monday before Election Day without a corresponding allocation of those lost 6 hours. Not allowing grandchildren to drop off absentee ballots will continue to limit voting opportunities for senior citizens. All of the above reduce accessibility.

HB 458 addresses a security issue that essentially does not exist. It adds further steps in a process for both the state and the individual voter; further complicating the process of voting while increasing costs. It creates further barriers to voting thereby diminishing accessibility and participation in one of the most important aspects of a representative democracy. I urge this committee to reject HB 458.