

## Testimony in Opposition to Sub H.R. 458

Thank you, Chair Gavarone, Vice-Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Maharath, and members of the Local Government and Elections Committee, for allowing me to express my concerns about Sub H.R. 458.

Voter registration has been my hobby and my passion for almost 20 years. I've participated in numerous organized voter registration drives, and also registered people on my own. I live in Bowling Green and do most of my voter registration in Wood County. Thus, Senator Gavarone, it is quite possible that I registered people who voted for you.

As a retired college professor, I gravitate towards registering students. Senator Gavarone, and perhaps other members of this committee, have a district with a college or university, and a large number of students as constituents. I hope you have considered how Sub H.B. 458 will impact this demographic. College students are relatively new to voting, and many are unfamiliar with the requirements. Some do not know that they have to re-register after moving, that they have a specific polling location assigned to them, or that they need ID to vote. The high rate of provisional voting among college students is evidence of this lack of knowledge. If you complicate the voting process, the student vote will be further suppressed.

The provision in Sub H.R. 458 that requires an Ohio drivers' license or ID, or a military ID to cast a vote, will impact voting rates in students. It affects students who do not drive or who moved here from another state. Sub H.R. 458 eliminates the alternative ways people can prove they are properly registered, such as a utility bill that verifies their residence. No evidence has been offered that the alternative IDs currently in use have allowed people to vote illegally, so why make it harder for people to show they are entitled to vote?

There has been a flurry of legislative activity in recent weeks. Bills have been revised, and it has been a challenge for citizens to keep updated on the substitutions. To my knowledge, no bill currently under consideration will require a driver's license to have the voter's current address to satisfy the voter ID requirement. That would be disastrous for students. Some students have a new residence almost every fall when they return to campus. After arriving on campus, students would have a little more than two months to apply for, and receive in the mail, a new driver's license in order to vote in a November election. That would be an unacceptable barrier to the participation in the democratic process.

Another concern is the impact Sub H.B. 458 will have on people with disabilities. It restricts curb side voting to people who are "physically unable to enter the polling place." I'm a volunteer poll monitor, and in 2020, I witnessed a line for early voting in Toledo that stretched around most of a city block, creating more than a two hour wait. In 2022, we had multiple complaints of long lines due to lengthy ballots and voting machine issues. A voter with enough stamina to walk from a parking space into the polling location might not be able to stand for hours waiting to vote.

I am also puzzled by the requirement that an Ohio driver's license indicate citizenship. Sub H.B. 458 does not explain how this information will be used to secure the voting process. An aspiring voter does not need to show a driver's license to register to vote, so the absence of a citizenship insignia will not prevent voter registration. Sub H.B. 458 does not instruct poll workers to check for a citizenship insignia on the voter's ID, so its absence won't prevent a person from voting. The only accomplishment of a citizenship marker will be to stigmatize immigrants. The most likely reason a voter would not be designated as a citizen would be that he or she was recently naturalized. Would you want this person to be accused of voter fraud for forgetting to have this scarlet letter removed from a driver's license?

If you question the security of Ohio elections, be assured by Secretary of State Frank LaRose. He stated, "Voter fraud is rare in Ohio. One of the reasons it's rare is because we have good laws on the books."

<https://www.wtol.com/article/news/politics/state-politics/13-people-in-ohio-illegally-voted-2020-election/512-1b7fd295-55a3-4b78-871c-9d42c06135fb>

Given that our current laws are making voter fraud virtually nonexistent, stricter laws will only prevent legitimate voters from voting. Sub H.R 458 is being fast-tracked without sufficient scrutiny of the negative consequences. Take a break for the holiday, and return in the new year when you have more time to create good law.

Please let me know if you have questions.

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