

Chairman Peterson, Vice Chairman Thomas, Ranking Member Forhan and members of the House Government Oversight Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify today in staunch opposition to HB144/SB92, bills clearly designed to extinguish the voices of the people.

This Republican bill legislates an exemption from the law (HB 458), passed by Republicans at the end of 2022 to eliminate August special elections. Your argument for HB458, that it uses \$20M of Ohio taxpayer funds to run a special election, is still valid. Yet you have requested it for one blatant reason: to silence the people of Ohio. You see that we still have a collective bi-partisan voice through the 111 year old process for amending our constitution, in spite of the hideous rigged unconstitutional maps you imposed on us. So you demand to change the rules through that very same process to stop us and expect us to pay for it.

I must advise the house members backing this bill, it smells as bad to the public and is just as unpopular as the reproductive freedom amendment it targets is popular. We tell every voter who signs the petition about these bills to subvert democracy. My experience in the 3 counties near me is that most voters know about your intended naked power grab and they hate it. Some comments from them about it are even inappropriate for this testimony. You may finally be making it clear to your own supporters that you are proudly anti-democracy. The 60 year old white male voter who signed recently in Powell, told us he is a lifelong Republican, but you have "gone too far with abortion" he knows "it hurts women" and he drove to us to sign the petition. It was the same from the Republican woman in Marysville who signed my petition last week. We will continue to collect signatures from your Republican constituents by the hundreds every week. They are finally realizing what we have known for a long time, that what you're doing is not democracy, it's treading all over it.

This bill is further subversion of democracy by a party who has rigged Ohio's maps for over decade and continues to defy the voters, the constitution and Ohio Supreme Court. It is opposed by more than 200 bipartisan groups, four bipartisan governors and all of Ohio's bipartisan elections officials and voters know this.

In 1912, President Theodore Roosevelt said in Ohio: "I protest against any theory that would make the constitution a means of thwarting instead of securing the absolute right of the people to rule themselves."

I protest it too.

Ohio Republican legislators are thwarting the absolute right of the people to rule themselves again with this bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I ask you to vote AGAINST HB144 and listen to the people instead of working to stifle them to enforce an unpopular agenda.