

Richard Barga
3808 Clinton Ave
Cleveland Ohio, 44113

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Chair Peterson, Vice Chair Thomas, Ranking Member Humphrey, and all honorable members of the Government Oversight Committee:

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. My name is Richard Barga from Cleveland Ohio and I am writing to oppose the passage of Senate Bill 158.

Are we a free people? Do we have the right to make our own decisions?

The question of self determination continues to disorient us. Local Issue 38 in Cleveland puts forward the question of allocating public funds through a citizen led, democratic process to the ballot box this November.

What could be threatening about this ballot initiative? Ohio law requires appropriation decisions be made by a municipal corporation's legislative authority. Whether passed by city council or the people of the City of Cleveland, why should the state seek to quell the voice of the latter?

However, Senator Cirino's Senate Bill 158 seeks to limit the power of citizen-led initiatives, ensuring that governing bodies cannot be circumvented, thus denying the population the chance to express their will in free elections. This is a gross overstep of the State.

And why is this bill coming to the legislature now? For more pay to play politics?

Senator Cirino must be having a crisis of faith. His own website states that "As a conservative, local governments should control more and more of their destiny, not less." Shouldn't he want to keep the state overlords out of the business of local government?

He has forgotten his own beliefs in being a conservative, stomping on the will of the citizens to determine their own destiny.

Regardless of your stance on Issue 38, voters in Cleveland, and voters in every municipality in Ohio, deserve the opportunity to vote on local, citizen-led ballot initiatives.

I strongly oppose SB 158 and I implore you to vote no.

Sincerely,

Richard Barga