

**Opponent Testimony on SB 91
Government Oversight Committee
December 12, 2023**

Dear House Rep. Peterson and members of the Government Oversight Committee,

My name is Molly Martin and I am writing to oppose SB 91, specifically the amendment that targets participatory budgeting, "(c) The expenditure is not compelled by a process authorizing management, control, distribution, or disbursement of an appropriation or expenditure by a vote of the subdivision's or taxing unit's residents."

I was the lead organizer of People's Budget Cleveland, an organization in Cleveland that put Issue 38 on the November 7 ballot in Cleveland to enable voters to decide whether a small portion of Cleveland's budget would be determined using participatory budgeting. We lost by 1,201 votes, indicating significant interest by citizens to shape local government with new civic engagement tools like participatory budgeting.

The process of participatory budgeting has been implemented by hundreds of cities in the U.S., and all projects selected by residents who participate in the process must be projects that benefit the public, comply with state laws around procurement and bargaining, and must pass through the city's Board of Control, a safeguard measure in the People's Budget process, which aims to increase civic engagement.

If the philosophy of creating a limitation on government powers and for local municipalities to self-govern still holds, then please vote against SB 91. The amendment targeting participatory budgeting is a lingering anti-democratic tactic first used by Senator Cirino when he introduced SB 158 back in September to confuse and dissuade Cleveland voters. The timing of SB 158 was no mistake, and it was introduced to prevent the passage of Cleveland Issue 38.

Democracy is best served when we trust the discretion of voters and of local governments to implement policies that address their unique needs and problems. Please honor municipalities' home rule right to self-govern and oppose Issue 91.

Sincerely,

Molly Martin

People's Budget Cleveland (PB CLE)