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Sponsor Testimony for House Bill 437

Chair Peterson, Vice Chair Thomas, Ranking Member Humphrey, and Members of the Government Oversight Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you about our bill.

My joint sponsor Rep. Lorenz and I seek to close our primary system to limit the ability of candidates to mislead voters and to limit the ability of partisan voters to manipulate a different party's primary results.

In our current system, voters can request any party's ballot during a primary or vote issues only. This won't change for Ohioans who chose their current affiliation based upon their values, whether they vote Democrat, Republican or nonpartisan. HB 437 *would* require voters who wish to change their party affiliation to do so at least 90 days before a primary election. Our belief is this will help deter those who intend to manipulate the results of our primaries. Each party should have the right to determine their own candidates for general election without meddling from outside.

The bill also affects candidates. Citizens who wish to run for partisan office can do so when affiliated with any party, and they may change their party when they file to run for office. That is disingenuous at best and intended to fool the voters. As Rep. Lorenz and I told the press when we introduced this bill, "It's about integrity. A candidate who tries to run for a party with whom they do not affiliate and for whom they have never voted should not be allowed to fool voters. *We saw* this in a judicial race in Delaware and Knox Counties *this past March*."

Being able to change party affiliation shortly before the start of a primary, especially when the candidate has no voting record in said party, is dishonest and ultimately manipulates and misleads voters. I believe voters have the right to understand exactly who is running for any elected position and whether candidates share their partisan values or not. House Bill 437 ensures and secures this right.

This Legislation will also require a candidate to have voted within the same party they are on the ballot for in the last primary. LSC has expressed constitutional concerns about this issue, and we are happy to discuss options.

We are also aware there are similar bills to ours and willing to work with our colleagues to create the best and most thorough elections integrity bill we can for the sake of Ohio voters.

Thank you for your consideration, we're willing to answer any questions from the committee.