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Chair Peterson, Vice Chair Thomas, Ranking Member Humphrey, and members of the House Government Oversight Committee, thank you for giving me and my co-sponsor, Representative Holmes, the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 609, which modifies Campaign Finance Law regarding foreign nationals and ballot initiatives.

Existing state and federal laws prohibit foreign nationals from making contributions in candidate races, while contributions and expenditures related to ballot initiatives are not touched on. This critical piece of legislation closes that major loophole in Ohio's current campaign finance laws. By forbidding foreign nationals from participating in initiatives and referenda in our state, we are further ensuring integrity in our elections.

Recent elections have demonstrated this susceptibility to foreign meddling in our elections. Because of this loophole, foreign entities can exercise undue influence over Ohio's elections, as seen in the relationship between the Sixteen Thirty Fund and Swiss billionaire Hansjorg Wyss. In recent elections, Wyss has donated over \$200 million to the fund. At the same time, the Sixteen Thirty Fund has spent millions of dollars to influence numerous ballot measures.

We must protect every aspect of our democratic process at a time when maintaining the integrity of our elections is critically important. House Bill 609 eliminates this loophole, ensuring that wealthy foreign interests cannot influence Ohio's elections.

We do not take the emergency clause lightly. However, we believe that immediate action is required to avoid the type of influence discussed above in future election cycles. By enacting this legislation immediately, we can protect our elections and ensure that ordinary Ohioans are not muffled by foreign interests.

House Bill 609 is an important step in protecting our democracy from foreign influences. Closing this loophole demonstrates our commitment to conducting fair and transparent elections.

I encourage my colleagues to support this legislation and act quickly to enact this critical safeguard. Thank you again for the chance to give sponsor testimony on House Bill 609. I am happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.