

Vanessa Joy - Opponent Testimony to HB 471

*** Written only, will not be in-person ***

1 June 2024

Chair Peterson, Vice Chair Thomas, and the rest of the House Government Oversight Committee:

A preface: I am writing this opposition as my own opinion, and not that of any organization in which I represent.

I am writing in opposition to House Bill 471.

I am going to be perfectly frank: this bill is entirely ridiculous in its timing and its sponsors. Primary elections have been held for many, many years in Ohio. This past primary cycle made some history, as three Transgender women ran for their party primaries for seats in the Ohio House of Representatives. Myself, Bobbie Arnold, and Arienne Childrey. Arnold and Childrey were allowed to keep running, while I was disqualified, due to ORC 3513.06.

During the certification process, Candidate Childrey had her candidacy challenged by Republican Party Robert J. Hibner, which was denied due to Hibner's affiliation with a different party than Childrey's.

A few months later, this bill is introduced by Rep King, who is being challenged by Childrey in the November election, and Rep Creech, who is being challenged by Arnold in that election. This is most certainly not a coincidence.

The time for a member of one party to submit an opposition to the candidacy of the other party is not for the Primaries. If there is a legitimate concern, it would make far more sense for the opposition to be submitted before the General Election.

I fail to see why HB 471 is suddenly needed now, and why taxpayer money is being wasted on giving more time and energy to this. Reps King and Creech should be focusing on their own campaigns, and serving Ohioans, rather than finding ways to add additional barriers to candidates running for Primaries.

Primaries are party-specific. When I circulated my petitions for candidacy, I had to choose a party to represent, and I chose to run as a Democrat. Had anyone else in my district ran as a Democrat, the primary election would have been held to have other Democrats decide who is the most fitting candidate. Allowing a member of either party to submit opposition to a candidate of the other party is simply a way to interfere in an election through a legislative loophole.

Reps King and Creech can face their opponents in the General election when candidates of all parties run against each other. From an outside perspective, it certainly looks like they are finding ways to keep future political opponents from running. This cuts both ways, as well. Under their rule, a Democrat could find information about a Republican candidate that could cause great concern and submit opposition. Do Republicans want their opposition to dig up the skeletons in their closet before they even make it to the General election?

We are living in an extremely divisive political climate. We do not need to be finding ways to divide ourselves even further. I would much rather see the General Assembly finding ways to work together FOR THE PEOPLE THEY REPRESENT, rather than creating further division.

As a citizen of Ohio, I would like to remind every member of the House and Senate that they are elected to represent ALL of the people in their districts, not just those of the same party.

Ohio has much bigger problems to worry about. I want my tax money to go to making the lives of Ohioans better and creating more equality and understanding. This is just political squabbling through legislation, and in my opinion, makes King and Creech appear to be so afraid of their opponents in November that they are making up ways to keep a situation like theirs from happening in the future.

Had this bill be introduced by any other two candidates, I doubt this would be receiving as much attention as it is. This isn't Kindergarten. Reps King and Creech look like two kids complaining to their teacher that another kid is drawing with the crayons that they wanted to use, while each of them is holding identical crayons to the ones the other kid has.

Jake Zuckerman at the Plain Dealer reported earlier this year that 2023 was the least productive legislative year in the Ohio General Assembly at least since Dwight Eisenhower was in office.

That's over 60 years. Rather than working to build Ohio up, instead in 2023 they spent countless taxpayer dollars to make it illegal for six kids to play sports in school. **SIX**. Ohio has nearly 12 million residents. There are homeless people on nearly every offramp on the highway in populated areas. Many of them are veterans. Shouldn't you be finding ways to help people, rather than hurt extremely vulnerable minorities?

Shame on you. Do better. Throw this bill out and stop wasting our money.

Sincerely,

Vanessa Joy

Former candidate for Ohio House District 50
Executive Producer, Transcending Humanity Podcast