

TESTIMONY:

*Ohio Senate General Government Committee
SB 92 — Opposition Testimony
April 18, 2023*

Chair Rulli, Vice Chair Schuring, Ranking Member DeMora and members of the Senate General Government Committee.

Thank you for allowing me to testify today in opposition to Senate Bill 92. My name is Desiree Tims. I serve as president and CEO of Innovation Ohio and Innovation Ohio Education Fund. We partner with a wide range of prominent Ohio organizations representing dozens of policy interests to improve the lives of Ohioans. We also work with diverse communities to share information about important legislation moving through our Statehouse.

Currently, May 2nd and November 7th are the scheduled Election Days in Ohio for 2023. Voters have already started making their plans, and doing research on the candidates in preparation for this year's elections. Adding a surprise election to the calendar is simply unnecessary, confusing, and costly to taxpayers.

We know that Ohioans are not accustomed to voting during the summer months. The last time Ohio voters considered a constitutional amendment in August was 1926, almost 100 years ago. A constitutional amendment added to a new August 2023 ballot would simply not receive adequate attention, thought, or discussion due to its timing.

Just five months ago, this very body banned August special elections when it passed HB458. The sponsor of that measure, Representative Thomas Hall, said in sponsor testimony last year that August special elections are "historically low voter turnout elections." He went on to say that holding an election in August is equivalent to "gaming the system" when "most of the electorate is not engaged in the process". When last year's redistricting fiasco led to two primaries - fewer than 7% of Ohio voters voted in August,

compared to 21% who turned out in the regular May primary. Do we want to give a 7% small minority the power to change our constitution? The answer is 'no'.

Finally, the appropriation of \$20 million to pay for the cost of conducting a special election in August is an unnecessary expense that could be better allocated to other essential programs in the state. Representative Hall in sponsor testimony on the need to eliminate August special elections said that instead of holding an election in August, local Boards of Election should instead be working to “clean up the voter rolls, enter voter registrations into the database or conduct voter outreach and education.”

I ask you to vote 'no' on Senate Bill 92. The benefits of creating a surprise election in August do not outweigh the potential drawbacks, including low voter turnout, unnecessary expenses, and potential harm to the Ohio constitution.

Chair Rulli, Vice Chair Schuring, Ranking Member DeMora and members of the Senate General Government Committee, this concludes my testimony. I am happy to answer any questions.