

Tanmay Shah
3677 W 139th Street
Cleveland, Ohio 44111

September 24, 2023

Dear Chairman Rulli and Ranking Member DeMora,

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to submit testimony on SB 158. My name is Tanmay Shah and I am writing to oppose the passage of Senate Bill 158, a law that would prohibit participatory budgeting in Ohio.

Cleveland voters deserve the opportunity to vote on Issue 38 in Cleveland. SB 158 is a blatant attempt to strip Clevelanders of their ability to decide for themselves on the question of creating a People's Budget. The process of participatory budgeting has been used in hundreds of cities around the United States as a form of civic education and engagement for residents to work with elected officials and city government to determine how their taxpayer dollars are spent.

Prohibiting participatory budgeting is an attack on the democratic process. Our society is built on empowering the voters and we should be doing more to encourage citizens to engage with government, not less. Additionally, the senator who has introduced this bill isn't even representative of Cleveland! With all due respect to Senator Cirino, he should focus on his constituents and what they want instead of working against the people of Cleveland. Participatory budgeting does NOT divert funds from necessary things such as EMS but rather allows residents to choose where the discretionary funds are spent. Allowing any form of SB 158 to proceed is a blatant power move by the statehouse.

I live in Cleveland and I am excited about the participatory budgeting process to start. Already, neighbors are discussing how our community can look different and benefit from this process. Please allow this organic process to happen instead of standing in the way of the people.

SB 158 prevent localities from addressing local problems that are in the jurisdiction of a home rule community. I strongly oppose SB 158, and would be happy to speak with any members of the committee in more details about our opposition.

Sincerely,

Tanmay Shah