

Dear Chairman Rulli and Ranking Member DeMora:

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to submit testimony on SB 158. I am writing to oppose the passage of Senate Bill 158.

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.

In this era of declining participation in civic affairs, any direct democracy efforts should be strongly encouraged. To preempt direct democracy at a local level is inherently corrosive to the rebuilding of trust in municipal governance.

I strongly oppose SB 158, and would be happy to speak with any members of the committee in more details about my opposition. Democracy is best served in the capable hands of the voters themselves.

Sincerely,

Caleb Howard