

Opponent Testimony for S.B. 137
Ohio Senate, General Government Committee
February 21, 2024

To the members of the Ohio Senate General Government Committee,

I am submitting this testimony as a private citizen in strong opposition to Senate Bill 137, which seeks to prohibit jurisdictions in Ohio from implementing ranked choice voting (RCV) by leveraging state funding as a coercive measure. This bill represents a significant overreach that undermines the fundamental tenets of local governance and threatens the integrity of our electoral system.

First, S.B. 137 directly contravenes the principle of home rule, enshrined in the Ohio Constitution, which grants cities and villages the autonomy to administer their own affairs, including elections. By threatening to withhold millions of dollars in taxpayer money, this legislation sets a dangerous precedent of state interference in local decision-making and will only further erode trust in the state government. It is imperative that this committee upholds the rights of local communities to determine the methods by which they elect their representatives without undue coercion or intrusion. Regardless of your opinion on ranked choice voting itself, the Ohio Constitution should be inviolable.

With that being said, the merits of ranked choice voting cannot be understated. Contrary to the assertions of some factions, RCV is not beholden to any particular ideology. It enhances the democratic process by ensuring that election outcomes more accurately reflect the preferences of voters. Liberal jurisdictions will still elect liberals. Conservative jurisdictions will still elect conservatives. However, the person ultimately elected is more likely to represent the voters, due to RCV's consensus-building nature and its tendency to produce a greater number of high-quality candidates. Under RCV, voters have the opportunity to express their true preferences without fear of the "spoiler effect," whereby third-party supporters are blamed for a major party candidate's loss. There is no doubt that political parties will have less influence under ranked choice voting, but no political ideology is targeted or harmed by the format itself.

For both of the reasons stated above, I urge you to reject Senate Bill 137 outright.

Thank you,

Noah Collin
Shaker Heights, OH