

February 20, 2024

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Dear Chairman Rulli, Ranking Member DeMora and members of the General Government Committee,

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to submit testimony on SB 137. My name is Carolyn Brommer and I am a resident of Bath Township (Akron). I am a retired attorney and federal mediator who is very concerned about the future of our country and our democracy. Our country is as divided and polarized as I have seen in my lifetime, and most of the citizens I engage with view our government as ceasing to function in a way that meets the needs of the country and the state. From my interactions, Ohio citizens want our representatives to address problems that need urgent attention, and *to work together* to find policy solutions that align with the preferences of the majority of our citizens, not with minority views on each end of the political spectrum. They are tired of partisan bickering and the lack of effective problem solving, resulting in more Ohio voters identifying as “independent” than Republican or Democrat combined. They feel an overall sense of futility at even participating in our political and voting processes. They are tired of being forced to vote for candidates they do not support but feel they must select a lesser of two evils. In short, our democracy is at a critical point, and our voters want more voice and more choice.

Ranked choice voting (RCV), where enacted, has been shown to address a number of these concerns. In an RCV system, candidates work (in both campaigning and governing) to appeal to a broader range of voters, to solve problems, and to do so with less partisan attack and acrimony. They know that they must not just appeal to their base, but also to other voters who might select them as a second choice, if they do not win a 50%+1 majority in the first tally of votes. It actually frees up candidates and elected representatives to work to their best ability to be what they stepped up to be—public servants working for the common good. This meets the needs of voters by resulting in better outcomes on issues and policy. Just as importantly, it can help break down polarization and division by reinforcing that, regardless of party, the majority of our citizens do have many policy solutions in common and our representatives can work across party lines to implement those solutions.

SB 137 would not only prevent local communities from adopting a type of election reform that would benefit their communities but also cause those same communities to suffer from a lack of essential state funding, crucial for the well-being of its citizens. SB 137 also directly threatens home rule by coercing localities using state funding. Our state legislators should have faith in our local representatives and communities to know what is best for them when it comes to voting, consistent with the very principles of home rule. Our state legislators should focus their time, energy and resources on truly statewide issues that need overall consistency, like a constitutional school funding system, tax structures, constitutional voting districts, and more.

I urge you to vote against SB 137—have faith in our citizens and in home rule in Ohio!

Sincerely,

Carolyn Brommer