

**February 21, 2024**

**Secretary of State Proponent Testimony: SB 137**

Chairman Rulli, Vice Chair Schuring, Ranking Member DeMora, and members of the Ohio Senate General Government Committee, thank you for providing me the opportunity to offer testimony in support of Senate Bill 137.

In Ohio, we take pride in running elections where it easy to vote, hard to cheat, and where the results are honest and transparent. Voters understand how to make their voices heard at the ballot box and have several convenient options for doing so. We investigate and prosecute voter fraud, and we work to keep our voter rolls clean. On election night, Ohioans can view unofficial results on either OhioSoS.gov or on the county boards of elections' websites. This is possible because of the hard work of our elections officials and because of a simple and common-sense rule – the candidates who receive the most votes win.

Our emphasis on these priorities has made our elections a national gold standard, and they provide a strong foundation for our democratic republic by establishing “the consent of the governed.” Unfortunately, ranked-choice voting (RCV), which is increasingly being pushed by national special interest groups, would undercut this foundation and take our state backwards. For this reason, I urge the legislature to support SB 137 and prohibit ranked-choice elections in Ohio.

RCV would institute a new set of confusing rules for casting a ballot and complicated formulas for determining a winner. Even the supporters of this system acknowledge the challenges for properly educating voters. However, they underestimate the burden placed on elections officials. More complicated ballots mean longer lines at polling locations and additional staffing needs. Tabulation of results would also take longer, and when weeks or months pass without a clear winner, voter confidence is severely impacted.

At the same time, RCV falls short on a major goal of the proposed system, that of electing candidates with an overall majority of the vote. Undervotes, where the voter fails to vote in every race on their ballot, are already a concern for many local contests and on long ballots. With the more complicated ballots of an RCV election, this issue is exacerbated. Voters who fail to rank every candidate in a contest are at risk of having

their ballots “exhausted,” or thrown out, in multiple rounds of tabulation. This means the winners of an RCV race do not necessarily represent the will of the majority of participants – despite giving the appearance of a majority vote.

I am confident that Ohio’s elections are accessible, secure, and transparent. We are seen as a model for other states because we never rest on our laurels and constantly strive to improve. However, ranked-choice voting is a step in the wrong direction, and for that reason I strongly support Senate Bill 137 and respectfully request this committee favorably report this important piece of legislation.

Yours in service



Frank LaRose

Ohio Secretary of State