

January 21, 2024

Samaria Chicas  
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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 Samaria Chicas, I am a resident of the City of Columbus. I am in software development for a financial services company and I am writing to oppose the passage of Senate Bill 137.

While I encourage my fellow citizens to stay engaged in government and vote in all elections, I understand the pessimism expressed by those who choose not to vote; they do not feel their vote matters or would rather not vote at all than vote for 'the lesser of evils' in their perspective.

The last decade has seen an increase in mistrust in government and elected office: partisanship has created a gridlock in legislatures at the national, state, and local level as elected officials seek to generate attention through outrage; voters feel their voice is irrelevant as candidates win without a basic majority; constituents do not sense strong accountability from their elected representatives.

I learned about ranked choice voting (RCV) in early 2023 and was enthusiastic about what this style of voting could mean for increasing turnout across the political spectrum and for creating a stronger bond between elected officials and their constituents.

When voters feel they can vote with their hopes, not their fears, they are more likely to participate in the most critical component of our democracy. When we require a candidate to win with a true majority, we have more assurance that they will act on the best interests of all constituents, versus knowing they only have to appeal to just enough voters. Additionally, since candidates could still win a majority by being someone's second choice, RCV encourages more positive campaigning where candidates appeal to voters who have another candidate as their first preference. RCV has also been shown to increase opportunities for more candidates to run; without the 'spoiler effect' more citizens are empowered to run for office, increasing the choices available to voters.

RCV can provide a way for municipalities to transform the voting process and put more power in the hands of their citizens for the reasons outlined above. SB 137 would prevent localities from deciding whether RCV is right for them; the impact to funding would essentially remove the choice even if local voters want RCV for their own elections.

I urge you to consider voting against SB 137 to ensure Ohio supports home rule authority as granted by the Ohio Constitution and help positively impact voter participation in local elections.

Sincerely,  
Samaria Chicas