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Ohio Senate General Government Committee
Testimony opposed to Senate Bill 137
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Ohio Sustainable Business Council

Chairman Rulli, Vice Chairman Schuring, Ranking Member DeMora, and Members of the Senate General Government Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony opposed to Senate Bill 137 today. My name is Cathy Cowan Becker, and I am the owner of a small business called CCB Communications. Through this business I have contracted with local, state, and national nonprofits to provide various services such as communications, campaigns, fundraising, and administrative oversight.

Today I am testifying on behalf of the Ohio Sustainable Business Council, the Business for Democracy-Ohio collaborative, and myself as a small business owner.

I am opposed to SB 137 for three main reasons.

First, why would the state legislature want to tell cities how to run their own elections? As far as I know, no city in Ohio has adopted ranked choice voting, but suppose one did. It would have nothing to do with state government elections.

Ranked choice voting has been used successfully in other cities. If there are issues with ranked choice voting, then why are other cities using it? And aren't city leaders in Ohio capable of evaluating the pros and cons of ranked choice voting for themselves?

Second is the provision in SB 137 that would withhold local government funds from any city that enacts ranked choice voting.

According to the Ohio Municipal League, the local government fund is "one of the central pillars of the partnership between Ohio's state and local governments." It is critical to funding basic services such as police and fire, providing infrastructure such as roads and bridges, paying for services such as trash collection and snow removal, and providing community improvements such as parks and stormwater control.

Threatening to take away this critical source of funding from local governments, which already struggle to make ends meet, is tantamount to holding local governments hostage. It is a draconian approach to something that isn't a problem and isn't happening in Ohio.

Third is a concern about basic democracy. We need more democracy in this country, not less. Ranked choice voting gives voters a choice, which in turn allows more voters to participate in the system. If a voter can vote for the candidate of their choice without fear of wasting their vote, they are more likely to turn out to vote.

This bill would suppress these votes and does not deserve consideration in a legislative body whose existence is based on voting. Frankly, any politician who chooses to suppress votes rather than face legitimate challengers should not be in politics.

Democracy is a very important issue for voters. Voters do not want to feel that their local democracy is being taken away -- but that's exactly what would happen if SB 137 passes.

Don't be the politician who makes it harder for people to vote. Do not pass SB 137.