

Testimony Opposing SB 293

Chair Ray, Vice Chair LaRe, Ranking Member Brent, and members of the House General Government Committee,

Thank-you for allowing me to submit testimony concerning SB 293. My name is Lorraine (Lori) Urogdy Eiler. I am a senior citizen and a retired public-school teacher, and like so many Ohioans, I have relied on voting by mail when necessary. As I become older - my 70th birthday is in a few months, - I anticipate relying on this option more each year. When I follow every rule—fill out my ballot correctly, meet the deadline, and place it in the mail on time—I should not have to lie awake worrying that my vote might be discarded because of postal delays I cannot control. I spent decades serving communities where transportation barriers are real, and I have seen firsthand how vote-by-mail ensures that seniors, people with disabilities, working families, and students can have their voices heard. I want every eligible voter's ballot counted, and I see no reason to change laws that are already working. Our current four-day window is a reasonable, necessary safeguard to make sure timely ballots are delivered and counted.

SB 293 would throw out valid votes from eligible Ohioans—plain and simple. In the November 2024 election alone, more than 9,500 ballots arrived during the four-day post-election window, ballots that were properly completed, postmarked by the legal deadline, and mailed on time. Under this bill, every one of those Ohioans—who followed every single rule—would have had their vote discarded because of something entirely outside their control: the speed of the mail. This is government punishing voters for postal delays, not voter behavior, and it threatens the integrity and fairness of our elections. Moreover, every valid vote counts. In our recent local school board election, we have a tie as of Election Day. That tie will likely be broken by ballots that arrived properly postmarked before Election Day but came in after Election Day within the current statutory 4 day grace time. Counting all valid ballots ensures that those elected are indeed the choice of the voters. Counting all votes is far better than flipping a coin because varying postal speeds gave us a tie. Our community is not the only community in this position. Please ensure fairness by keeping our laws as they are. All valid ballots should be counted. The voices of the people should determine our leaders, not postal speeds.

The harm from SB 293 will fall hardest on communities already facing barriers. Rural Ohio voters who endure slower mail routes and reduced postal service days would be disproportionately disenfranchised. Seniors, people with disabilities, and Ohioans without reliable transportation—especially those living in poverty or students who do not have access to a vehicle—often rely on mail voting as their only accessible option. I worked in such a community for almost four decades. As a senior citizen, I realize the harmful impact of this bill will only get greater each year that I age. SB 293 targets me and all of these voters by eliminating the only safeguard that ensures their timely, legal ballots are counted. We should be removing obstacles to participation—not erecting new ones that silence the very voices who most need representation. Is this how you wish to treat the least empowered amongst us?

Current Ohio law already requires absentee ballots to be postmarked no later than the day before Election Day, meaning voters do not get “extra time” to vote. In fact, they get less time. The existing four-day acceptance period does not grant additional voting days; it simply provides a reasonable delivery window so that ballots cast by the legal deadline can make their way through the postal system. And Ohioans expect—rightfully—that when they follow the rules, their votes will count. Last November, more than 803,000 Ohio voters, nearly one-third of all early voters, returned their ballots through the U.S. Postal Service. SB 293 betrays their trust, undermines confidence in our elections, and discards the voices of law-abiding voters.

I fear my ability to have my legal vote counted in the future is being stripped from me. I am ardently opposed to SB 293 and urge you to vote against it.

Thank-you

Respectfully submitted,

Lorraine (Lori) Urogdy Eiler

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