



## Planned Parenthood Advocates of Ohio

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

My name is Danielle Firsich, and I am the Director of Public Policy for Planned Parenthood Advocates of Ohio and Planned Parenthood of Greater Ohio. Thank you for accepting my written testimony in strong opposition to Senate Bill 293. It is an insult to the constituents you serve to schedule an all-encompassing hearing with limited notice, to force an unpopular bill through the second chamber of this body without regard to public input or concern. It reeks of lack of accountability, and Ohioans deserve far better from their elected officials.

This legislation would require that valid votes be discarded, hindering voters both statewide and overseas. Hundreds of thousands of Ohio voters rely on absentee ballots to ensure their voice is heard in every election. In November 2024, 10,000 ballots were received during the four-day period.<sup>1</sup> Those votes wouldn't count if SB 293 were law. This bill only creates further barriers and especially impacts rural voters, voters with disabilities, Ohio's seniors, college students, and those with limited transportation.

Our state's election law requires that absentee ballots be postmarked on the day before Election Day. Maintaining a window of time for Boards of Elections to receive those ballots simply allows for eligible votes to be counted. Ohioans should not be punished for utilizing our entire election season timeline to cast their vote. Absentee voters aren't getting any extra time to vote. The existing 4-day acceptance period doesn't extend the time Ohio voters can cast a ballot--it's simply a mail delivery window to ensure ballots from eligible voters are counted.

Ohio's elections are incredibly safe and secure, despite widespread disinformation often encouraged and proliferated by the elected officials of this state. Eliminating the four-day window for Boards of Elections to receive eligible ballots only hurts voters and shuts them out from participating in democracy. Of the more than 2.6M Ohioans who voted before Election Day last November, 803,253 (31%) voters used the US Postal Service as their

preferred method of ballot return. <sup>1</sup> How do you justify hindering the democratic process for nearly a third of Ohio voters?

Instead of working to address real issues at the ballot box, SB 293 unnecessarily creates further barriers. Ohio's elections are safe and accurate. Our communities want increased accessibility for voting options – not cumbersome legislation seeking to fix nonexistent issues. Lawmakers must prioritize a strong, inclusive democracy and ensure every eligible citizen can vote.

I strongly urge this committee to vote no on Senate Bill 293.

<sup>1</sup>[https://www.ohiosos.gov/elections/voters/ohio-absentee-data/?link\\_id=5&can\\_id=147a6b9d50512c54fe57bac6ffb1508d&source=email-ovrc-action-alert-possible-senate-vote-to-restrict-mailed-ballots-wednesday&email\\_referrer=email\\_2962152&email\\_subject=ovrc-action-alert-possible-senate-vote-to-restrict-mailed-ballots-wednesday&&](https://www.ohiosos.gov/elections/voters/ohio-absentee-data/?link_id=5&can_id=147a6b9d50512c54fe57bac6ffb1508d&source=email-ovrc-action-alert-possible-senate-vote-to-restrict-mailed-ballots-wednesday&email_referrer=email_2962152&email_subject=ovrc-action-alert-possible-senate-vote-to-restrict-mailed-ballots-wednesday&&)