

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Natalie Curtis. I am a lifelong Ohioan, a resident of Fairfield County, a parent, and someone deeply invested in protecting fair and accessible elections for every community in our state. I am strongly opposed to SB 293.

This bill is not a minor procedural tweak, it is a direct threat to Ohioans' ability to have their voices heard. In the November 2024 election alone, more than 9,500 absentee ballots were delivered during Ohio's four-day grace period after Election Day. These were ballots legally cast, properly completed, and postmarked on time, but delayed by the U.S. Postal Service. Under SB 293, every one of those Ohioans, thousands of lawful voters, would have been completely disenfranchised through no fault of their own.

Across the state, the numbers are staggering. In the Miami Valley region, hundreds of ballots were counted only because of the grace period we currently have in law. Those ballots came from seniors, disabled voters, rural residents, and working parents, people who frequently face barriers to in-person voting and rely heavily on the mail for civic participation.

The broader context makes this even more alarming. In 2024, 2.6 million Ohioans, that's 44% of all voters, cast ballots early in person or by mail. Of those, over 800,000 voters mailed their ballots back. For many, mail-in voting is not a convenience; it is a necessity. Eliminating the grace period will disproportionately hurt these voters, silencing the very people who already face the greatest challenges to participating in elections.

SB 293 does nothing to improve election security. No evidence has been presented showing fraud or misuse of the existing grace period. What this bill does is throw out valid votes, inject fear and uncertainty into the voting process, and erode trust in our elections. It creates a system where a voter can do everything right, follow every rule, and still lose their voice because of a USPS delay. That is unjust, undemocratic, and unacceptable.

Ohio's elections should protect voters, not punish them for factors they cannot control. We should be working to strengthen participation, not putting up new barriers that silence thousands.

I urge you to consider my testimony, respect Ohio voters, and vote NO on this harmful bill. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

Sincerely,

Natalie Curtis (She/Her)

