

Opposition Testimony SB 293
House General Government Committee
Tamara Howard, Director of Advocacy YWCA Columbus

Chair Ray, Vice Chair LaRe, Ranking Member Brent, and members of the House General Government Committee. My name is Tamara Howard, and I serve as Director of Advocacy at YWCA Columbus thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to Senate Bill 293.

At YWCA Columbus, we are called by our mission to eliminate racism, empower women, and promote peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all – a mission that propels us to protect the promise of American democracy and the vision of a truly inclusive and representative government. Senate Bill 293 threatens fundamental democratic values by eliminating a crucial safeguard for Ohio's mail-in voters. The bill removes the current four-day grace period after Election Day, during which mail-in ballots that are postmarked on or before Election Day can still be counted if they arrive late due to postal delays.

This change would disproportionately harm some of Ohio's most vulnerable populations including seniors, individuals with disabilities, and those without reliable transportation - groups that often rely on mail-in voting as their primary or only means to participate in elections. The bill would disenfranchise many voters simply because their ballots were delayed through no fault of their own.

At YWCA Columbus, our Women's Residency program and emergency family shelter serve individuals facing significant barriers to civic engagement. We actively support our residents' civic participation by partnering with nonpartisan organizations to educate them on voting rights, ballot initiatives, and ways to cast their vote. Many of our residents depend on mail-in ballots, and this bill directly threatens their ability to have their voices heard.

SB 293 does not improve election security but instead imposes unnecessary restrictions that create confusion and suppress voter turnout. In the 2024 election alone, thousands of ballots arrived during the grace period and were properly counted; SB 293 would have invalidated these legitimate votes.

Reflecting on the promise of American democracy—a vision of inclusion, where every voice is valued—we must acknowledge that this promise of democracy has been hindered by systemic contradictions. Ohio has already started down a path of restricting voting – issuing one of the strictest voter ID laws in the country and limiting drop boxes, among



other restrictions. Removing this grace period directly undermines faith in Ohio's election system and jeopardizes the voting rights of many Ohioans, including those we serve at YWCA Columbus.

For these reasons, I urge this committee to oppose Senate Bill 293 and support policies that protect and expand voter access for all Ohioans.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.