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WRITTEN OPPONENT TESTIMONY OF MAX SWARTOUT

Constituent of Ohio Senate District 27
Hearing on Senate Bill No. 63, “Generally Prohibit The Use of Ranked Choice Voting”

Chairwoman Roegner, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Blackshear, and members of the Senate General Government Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to submit testimony today. My name is Max Swartout, and I am a resident of Cuyahoga Falls and an elementary music teacher in Kent City Schools District. I am writing in strong opposition to Senate Bill 63, which would ban Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) in Ohio.

SB 63 Undermines Local Control & Voter Choice

This bill represents unnecessary state interference that strips local communities of their constitutional right to govern their elections under Ohio’s Home Rule Authority. Local governments and voters should have the ability to choose the election methods that best serve their needs—not have those decisions dictated by state politicians.

Ohio has a long history of respecting local autonomy, yet SB 63 directly undermines that principle. The Ohio Supreme Court ruled in 1923 that municipalities and charter counties have the right to use RCV. Why should state lawmakers now override that right without justification? If a city or county believes that RCV leads to better voter engagement, fairer elections, and stronger leadership, they should be allowed to adopt it—just as they control zoning laws, education policies, and municipal governance.

As North Dakota Governor Doug Burgum put it when vetoing a similar bill:

"If we truly believe in limited government and local control, we can begin by honoring the boundaries, intent, and spirit of home rule charters, especially when there is no evidence of any harm having occurred from trusting the residents of cities to have self-determination within the bounds of their home rule charters."

Ranked Choice Voting Strengthens Democracy

SB 63 is not about protecting elections—it is part of a national disinformation campaign designed to restrict voter choice and maintain the status quo. The reality is that RCV improves elections in ways that benefit all voters, regardless of political affiliation:

- Majority rule: RCV ensures that winners have broad support, preventing candidates from being elected with small fractions of the vote in crowded races.
- Increased participation: In Minneapolis, voter turnout increased significantly in local elections after implementing RCV, particularly among young and diverse voters.
- More civil campaigns: Studies show that RCV reduces negative campaigning, as candidates must appeal beyond their core base to earn second-choice votes.
- Voter satisfaction: Over 80% of voters in Alaska & Utah found RCV simple and easy to use, and in New York City, 77% of voters wanted to continue using RCV after its 2021 elections.

A Ban on RCV Harms Both Conservative and Progressive Voters

Support for RCV is not a partisan issue—it has been used by Republicans and Democrats alike to ensure stronger candidates emerge in primaries and general elections. The Virginia Republican Party uses RCV in its primaries to elect nominees with broader appeal.

Furthermore, banning RCV hurts urban Republican candidates in Ohio cities where one-party rule dominates. In cities like Cleveland, Columbus, and Cincinnati, general elections are often decided in Democratic primaries. RCV would allow Republicans, independents, and alternative candidates to be more competitive by ensuring the eventual winner has broad support.

Conclusion: Protect Local Decision-Making & Voter Choice

Ohioans—not politicians in Columbus—should decide how their local elections are run. Home Rule Authority exists for a reason, and there is no justification for stripping communities of their right to improve their elections.

If SB 63 passes, it will set a dangerous precedent where the state government dictates how local governments operate—not based on facts or voter preference, but on political interests.

I urge you to reject SB 63 and respect the right of Ohio's communities to govern their own elections. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
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