

March 24, 2024

Dorothy S. Farris
70 Wonderlust Court
Painesville Township, Ohio 44077

Dear Chairperson, Roegner; Vice Chair Gavarone; Ranking Member Blackshear and members of the General Government Committee,

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to submit testimony regarding SB 63.

My name is Dorothy Farris, I am a resident of Painesville Township in Lake County. I am a retired Administrator from the State of Ohio Department of Agriculture's Division of Soil and Water Conservation (SWCD). Much of my career was spent supporting and serving Ohio's 88 locally-elected boards of SWCD supervisors. Prior to my state service, I was an ag journalist and a board member of the Lake County Soil and Water Conservation District. Currently, I regularly serve as a precinct election official in my community.

I am writing today to voice my personal opposition to the passage of Senate Bill 63.

As you read in my introduction, I am no stranger to the good work created by local and state government fiscal partnerships and the benefits of local self-government. So, at the heart of my personal opposition to Senate Bill 63 is how its passage will negatively affect local self-government effectiveness with not only the gross punitive fiscal mandate it includes, but also the general top-down attack on local government's lawful ability to establish its own framework for elections.

It is a disservice to the local communities and their citizens when unrelated and seemingly coerced State budgetary pullback measures deprive them of implementing their local priorities.

The language in SB 63 suggests something notorious about Ranked Choice Voting (RCV). My common sense and my research tell me the opposite.

Ranked Choice Voting is a smarter approach to the way we already vote. Voters benefit from having a larger voice as to who wins, and those winners win by a true majority of over 50%. In turn we run smarter elections, RCV uses an instant runoff process that eliminates separate and expensive runoff elections. Furthermore, RCV supports candidates – of any affiliation – running smarter campaigns more focused on the issues with a goal to not only be the top vote getter but also to garner as many of the 2nd or subsequent choice votes as possible. Nothing notorious at play here; not when voter choices have a stronger impact on elections and winning candidates win confidently with a mandate.

And just as compelling is the fact that RCV is a well-tested and time-tested method within a variety of jurisdictions including Ohio. As of the 2022 elections, RCV has been adopted nationwide in 62 jurisdictions - including 46 cities across the US, and 2 state and general elections. Over 80%

of voters in Alaska & Utah found RCV “simple” and “easy” after using it. A majority of Virginia Republicans who used RCV in the 2022 primaries said they preferred RCV.

In Ohio, RCV was previously used with much success in Ashtabula, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Hamilton, and Toledo for city council elections. Its use in Ohio diminished only when power grabbing, and unethical politicians sought to subvert the will of the people.

So, Ohioans know better. Let’s act better. Banning RCV for local elections violates the spirit of Ohioans’ right to self-government. SB 63 undermines home rule by dangling the loss of State local government funds for those communities wanting to lawfully enact RCV. There’s no benefit to either entity or Ohioans in general, if SB 63 passes. But the losses are significant in terms of peeling away at local government autonomy and Ohio citizens only becoming more disillusioned when they see their voices in voting and government marginalized.

Please act to save Ranked Choice Voting as a viable option for local Ohio communities and Ohio voters.

Thank you for your serious consideration of my testimony,
Dorothy S. Farris