

May 23, 2025

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

My name is Laura Rushton, and I am a retired teacher living in Strongsville. I have been a regular voter all my life. During my retirement, I have worked at the polls and volunteered with several civic groups. I am writing to express my opposition to SB 153. This bill makes massive changes to the electoral process which I see as unnecessary and extremely harmful.

My main objection to SB 153 is that it makes it much harder to register to vote and cast your ballot. The convenience of drop boxes at the Board of Elections has helped people cast their absentee ballots who are disabled or immune compromised or can't vote during regular business hours. Ohio's Secretary of State has boasted of our secure elections. I do not see how the removal of all drop boxes does anything to improve security. It simply creates another hurdle for some people to cast their ballot, which is their right as citizens.

SB 1 also requires proof of citizenship to register and to vote. This new requirement unfairly burdens people who lack transportation, live in rural areas, have changed their name through marriage, or have difficulty paying the processing fees for the required documents. Anyone whose BMV records don't match the voting records is at risk of having their vote thrown out. Board of Elections officials will be tasked with making sure these records match, which will add to their workload and make the system less efficient, with the result of frustrating citizens who simply want to exercise their right to vote. The state has presented no evidence of illegal voting that would warrant such a change, especially at the risk of disenfranchising citizens.

SB 153 also attacks the citizen initiative process, making it more difficult and expensive to put an issue on the ballot that the people want. The right to participate in direct democracy has been enshrined in Ohio's Constitution since 1912. It is not an easy thing to do to collect the required number of signatures in order to put an initiative on the ballot that the voters can accept or reject. Why do the bill's sponsors want to make it even harder, if not to silence their voice?

I respectfully urge the members of the Committee not to allow this bill to come to a vote. The drastic changes it proposes are unnecessary and will only serve to clog the electoral system, creating longer lines at the polls and more confusion for voters.

Thank you for taking the time to read my testimony. I regret that circumstances prevent me from testifying in person.

Sincerely,

Laura Rushton

21837 Little Brook Way

Strongsville, OH 44149

567-303-1954 (cell)