

Dear Chair Roegner, Vice-Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Blackshear, and Senate General Government Committee members,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in opposition to SB 153, which would require citizenship verification before an elector may vote – among many other things that would radically change voting in Ohio.

According to the bill sponsor's aide, the intent of this bill is to "prevent voter fraud." In fact, voter fraud in our state is exceedingly rare, thanks to the non-partisan efforts of our dedicated election officials. Despite repeated concerns expressed about voter fraud, the results of the 2024 audit show that we do, indeed, have a sound election system with an extremely low incidence of voter fraud. Further, it is already illegal for non-citizens to vote. In the current climate, where non-citizens risk deportation and worse, what non-citizen would even dare to vote?

(See <https://ohiocapitaljournal.com/2025/01/06/after-a-year-of-voter-fraud-concerns-ohios-election-audit-lands-north-of-99-again/>.)

From my understanding, SB 153, if allowed to pass, would devastate Ohio's election process in a variety of ways. I wonder why SB 153 is even on the table, when Ohio fairly recently passed a very tough law that forced election officials to make many changes in how voting is conducted. SB 153 represents a huge overhaul. We need to slow down and allow time for other recently passed election bills to be implemented. Our boards of election are already under-resourced and overburdened. This bill would add bureaucratic and financial burdens without providing additional resources, which is unfair to Board of Elections staff.

And why would drop boxes be eliminated? They have been shown to be very secure, and they help many voters who, for reasons of disability or work schedules, etc., would find it difficult to make it to the polls.

Also, the bill also would all but destroy the citizen initiative - one of the very few ways that citizens can directly petition the electorate, a right that has been long respected in Ohio. Not only would the citizen initiative process be undermined, but the bill goes so far as to threaten voters with potential prosecution. For what purpose? Is intimidation the goal? If so, how can such a bill possibly be good for a democratic republic "of, by and for the people"?

Or perhaps the goal of SB 153 (and its companion, HB 233) is to shrink the electorate. If so, what possible **good** would that serve?

Please do NOT allow SB 153 (or its companion bill in the House) to move forward.

Thanks for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Deborah Cooper