

Ohio Senate General Government Committee
Written Testimony
SB 82
Julie Leathers Stahl

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Blackshear, and the members of the Senate General Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written proponent testimony regarding Senate Bill 82, sponsored by Senators Gavarone and DeMora.

My name is Julie Leathers Stahl, and I currently serve as the Director for the Wayne County Board of Elections (WCBOE). Prior to coming to WCBOE in December of 2014, I was a poll worker for 22 years, served as a City Council Clerk for 10 years, and was a Ward Representative on City Council for 9 years.

As Local Election Officials (LEO's), we are tasked with following the rules and procedures set before us to administer fair, secure, and accurate elections to the best of our ability and with the resources provided to us. Administering elections isn't what it used to be. We used to "do our thing" in the background with most people thinking elections "just happened". In today's world, we have found ourselves on the front lines of defending our democracy, our jobs, and in some cases our safety.

A national survey conducted in 2024 revealed that 1 in 3 LEO's have experienced harassment, abuse or threats against them and/or their families. According to the survey, that's a 108 percent increase since 2022.

In Wayne County we have experienced some of this behavior-ranging from threats by disgruntled voters to a group of men entering our offices while videotaping and being disruptive. Fortunately, none of these incidents have been of a serious nature, but these experiences have put us in "high alert" status, especially around election time.

We are required to have security systems, cameras, take de-escalation training and active shooter training, do table-top exercises, watch our mail for suspicious substances, and even have Narcon on site "just in case".

Allowing Election Officials in Ohio's 88 counties to acquire Public Servant status is a step in the right direction in protecting those who are defending our democracy and facilitating elections in Ohio.

Thank you for permitting me to submit this testimony.

Julie Leathers Stahl