

Ohio Secretary of State Frank LaRose

Proponent Testimony: Senate Bill 4

May 27, 2025

Chair Roegner, Ranking Member Blackshear, and members of the Senate General Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on Senate Bill 4 which would codify the Election Integrity Unit within my office.

Since the time I assumed office, I have focused on strengthening the transparency, accountability, and efficiency of our elections. With your partnership, we have experienced tremendous success. Ohio now requires photo ID to vote, conducts post-election audits after every election, and created the Office of Data Analytics and Archives, which publishes election data for auditing purposes and year-over-year analysis, through the enactment of the landmark DATA Act. We have made tremendous strides, and Senate Bill 4 will continue to build upon Ohio's national leadership in election administration.

In 2022, I established the Public Integrity Division in the Secretary of State's office as part of an ongoing effort to improve the enforcement of election and campaign finance law. Senate Bill 4 would specifically codify the Election Integrity Unit within the Division, which is charged with investigating voter fraud and voter suppression, referring violations to prosecuting authorities, and reporting its actions to the Ohio General Assembly.

Under R.C. 3501.055, the Election Integrity Unit will establish in law the necessary tools to ensure our elections remain the most secure and accessible in the nation. In Ohio, we have a strong reputation for making it easy to vote and hard to cheat. The Election Integrity Unit has proven to be a vital resource to achieve that end. Since being established, the Election Integrity Unit has investigated and referred individuals to law enforcement for verifiable cases of ballot harvesting, voter registration fraud, petition fraud, and absentee voting fraud. They have also referred 597 individuals to the Ohio Attorney General's Office as part of our noncitizen review process. Codifying this unit's investigative capabilities will strengthen election security and bolster voter confidence for years to come.

Additionally, Senate Bill 4 would bring needed clarity to current law regarding the Attorney General's ability to prosecute election related crimes. Currently, county prosecutors have an undefined amount of time to act on a case that has been referred to them, either by our office or one of Ohio's 88 county boards of elections. This legislation establishes a 12-month timeframe for prosecutors to act on cases referred to them. After

a year has passed the Attorney General has the authority to take jurisdiction of the case. By establishing a specific timeframe, the county prosecutors, Attorney General, and Ohio voters would have needed clarity on the investigative timelines for alleged voter fraud or other election law violations.

Thank you, Senator Gavarone for your leadership on this important issue, and thank you Chair Roegner for allowing me to testify on Senate Bill 4. I look forward to answering any questions that you may have.

Yours in service,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Frank LaRose", written in a cursive style.

Frank LaRose

Ohio Secretary of State