

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Emily Vermillion. I am a resident of Heath Ohio and I work as a student affairs professional. I am a married woman, a mother, and I care deeply about Democracy and every citizens right to vote. I have worked for many years with organizations that register voters, no matter what political party they belong to. I strongly believe that all citizens should have access to the ballot box.

I am here to express grave concerns about SB 153 and its companion bill HB 233 due to this bill requiring documentary proof of citizenship which means you could only register to vote in person at the BMV or Boards of Elections, it requires that your ID match your voter information exactly, the legislation bans all drop boxes, it makes citizen led ballot initiatives more difficult, and if voters fail to respond to voter confirmation notices within 14 days of the second notice they could face prosecution. These are just a few problems with this bill.

It should be easy for all legal voters to participate in elections. Secretary of State, Frank LaRose has long touted the gold standard of Ohio elections as safe and secure, with a very low rate of fraud, and almost non-existent numbers of non-citizens voting. There are already systems in place to stop non-citizens from voting. "Ohioans deserve to know that their elections are transparent, accessible, and accountable," said Secretary LaRose (Secretary of State, Media Center 2024). "As 2024 comes to a close, I am proud to announce yet another 99.9% audit accuracy rate" Frank LaRose also stated, "With important local races on the horizon in 2025, it is important to remember that every vote counts." "Easy to vote and hard to cheat; that is our continued promise to every Ohioan (Secretary of State, Media Center 2024)." I agree that every vote should count and that it should be easy to vote. SB 153 breaks this promise to Ohioans because it creates barriers for millions of voters. When voting is too challenging people give up and do not vote. It begs the question, Is that the goal of this bill?

Under this legislation, I would not be eligible to update my voter registration or vote because I am married, and my name does not match the name on my birth certificate. This directly impacts women, or anyone who has changed their name after birth, right to vote. There are people that do not have access to their birth certificates or cannot afford the cost to get another one issued. Removing all drop boxes and creating legislation that would eliminate organization's ability to do voter registrations drives will create barriers to voters with disabilities. This legislation will force people to travel in person to register to vote, request an absentee ballot, etc....

Please consider my testimony and reject this un-American bill that makes it even harder for people to vote, in a state that already has some of the strictest voting laws. Prove to your constituents that you believe in a democracy where every citizen can vote without barriers, that you care about their right to vote, that you care about women, people with disabilities, and military members that would experience more challenges voting abroad if this were to pass. This bill puts more burden and strain on Board of Election employees which would put elections at greater risk. Please consider the potentially disastrous consequences of this bill and **reject** SB 153 and HB 233.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

Emily Vermillion MA, LPC