

Ohio Senate General Government Committee Testimony of

Martha J. Sweterlitsch

Opponent on SB 153 April 27, 2025

Good morning, Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Blackshear, and members of the Senate General Government Committee. My name is Martha Sweterlitsch, and I am presenting testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 153.

I am an attorney and a lifetime resident of Ohio. I am 80 years old, and I have voted in every election for which I was eligible to vote. For at least 20 years I have served as a poll observer, doing my best to make sure everyone who is eligible to vote gets the opportunity to do so. In all those years over all of those elections I have never encountered someone who is intentionally fraudulently trying to vote. There are a people who show up without proper ID, people who cannot read or write English and require assistance, people who are disabled and cannot access the voting location. This bill will make it even harder for those individuals to vote.

SB 153 is a “solution” in search of a problem. The number of noncitizens who actually vote is infinitesimal when compared to the total number of voters in any given election. And with respect to those noncitizens who do vote we should recall that individuals who apply for a driver’s license are asked if they would like to register to vote. Those few noncitizens who are invited to register may simply assume that they are allowed to vote. After all, a government representative is asking them if they want to register! Our election laws are already complicated enough for educated English speaking citizens to understand, let alone someone who is new to this country. Please do not make it even harder for citizens to vote, which is what this bill does with its proof of citizenship requirement and its challenge provisions. The challenge provisions are themselves an invitation to discriminate based on appearance and language. Even an unsuccessful challenge is intimidating and embarrassing to a voter.

Finally, this bill makes the already hard process of amending our constitution even harder. Ohioans spoke twice in the last 3 years on issues of overwhelming concern to the citizens of Ohio, first on reproductive rights and then on an effort by the Ohio General Assembly to limit the ability

of a majority of citizens to amend what is OUR constitution. Citizens should expect their elected representatives to honor their expressed wishes. This bill is a blatant attempt to undermine these citizen-led efforts by making the process even harder to carry out.

In summary, I urge you to reject this bill in its entirety. As written, it will disenfranchise otherwise eligible voters by creating additional barriers to voting. It will also unnecessarily consume the time and resources of already overworked staff at Boards of Election around the state. The job of the legislature should be to increase the voter rolls and make it easier to vote, not harder and to recognize the will of the voters, not undermine it.