

May 26, 2025

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

My name is Richard Pietro. I was born in Ohio and have been a life-long resident of Ohio. I spent a long career in public administration with a strong commitment to effective, efficient government service.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

I am writing to express my opposition to SB 153.

I find it very disheartening that this bill, while claiming to make elections more secure and reliable is actually a copycat of legislation urged by President Trump. Surely your committee is not relying on the word and urgings of the person who sought to overthrow the legitimate results of the 2020 election, and who is offering up daily evidence of his hostility toward the U.S. Constitution and toward legitimate democratic principles and institutions.

SB 153 and similar efforts appear to be a direct response to Donald Trump's admission in 2020 that proposed legislation to make it easier to vote, including mail-voting, would make it more difficult for Republicans to win elections: "The things they had in there were crazy. They had things, levels of voting that if you'd ever agreed to it, you'd never have a Republican elected in this country again." [Fox & Friends interview with Mr. Trump, March 2020]

Mr. Trump's failure to succeed in the courts was a reflection of the fact that his claims of voter fraud were without merit. The same can be said of the claims by supporters of SB 153. It claims to be trying to legislate solutions to alleged problems that do not exist. It is, in fact, a widely viewed attempt to suppress voting and to reduce the participation of citizens in general in the democratic process. It is quite clear by now that worries over whether our elections are safe and secure are simply the product of an ongoing misleading campaign of scare tactics and misinformation.

SB 153 is unnecessary and harmful. It attacks the citizen initiative process, making it more difficult and expensive for Ohio citizens to make our voices heard at the ballot box. It makes it harder to register to vote and cast a ballot.

SB 153 burdens local Boards of Election with unfunded mandates and significant, labor intensive work requirements while giving them zero additional support. At the same time, it eliminates drop boxes, which will require more election staff to be available during early vote season to accept and process ballots.

SB 153's threats of investigations and prosecutions send the wrong message to the body politic and have dubious Constitutional legitimacy.

SB 153's negative impact on the democratic processes in Ohio would be costly and inefficient, and it would further divide, instead of unite, citizens of Ohio.

The legislature should not rush such a significant and dangerous bill, especially during our primary election season when election officials have not even had time to weigh in. **Please vote no on SB 153.**

Sincerely,

Richard Pietro