

May 26, 2025

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

My name is Jennifer Williams. I am a proud, 5th-generation Ohioan and a 32-year rural Morrow County resident. Before becoming a 4th-generation grocery store owner, I was a vice president at a large corporate bank for 20 years.

I am here to express my opposition to SB 153, which claims the goal of making our elections more secure. Instead, it creates government bureaucracy and red tape to solve a problem that does not exist.

Senator Gavarone said SB 153 is a “simple fix.” All due respect, any document this long—even if it was actually solving a problem—could not possibly be simple, or efficient to implement and manage at the state or county levels.

Secretary of State Frank LaRose said Ohio has the election “gold standard.” And he’s right, as the latest 99.99% audit result shows. With those audit results, I’m not at all worried about the security of our elections—even when I don’t like the results.

In business, when you consistently perform well, that’s the time to take things to the next level, and get even better to serve your customers.

In this case, you, our elected representatives, should put your time and resources into making it easier—not harder—for all Ohioans to participate in democracy: registering to vote, voting, and getting issues and candidates on the ballot. The hardworking county Boards of Elections and dedicated poll workers, the true election heroes in the trenches, are the first people to involve.

We should have more ballot drop boxes, not none. We should not make it hard for married women who changed their name to vote. We should have more early voting options, and in more than just the county seat. If we can securely pay our taxes and do financial transactions online, why can’t we use more technology?

I am worried about our state. We dropped two more spots to #38 in the U.S. News & World Report annual ranking. It seems not unrelated that we have low voter turnout, limited interest in running for elected office, low community engagement and leadership to serve in appointed roles, especially among the younger generations, and not-stellar knowledge of civics and government at all ages.

We need to find more ways to get Ohioans involved to make us stronger and better everywhere, not just the cities. I don’t like seeing my state at the bottom of a ranking. Making it easier to participate in local and state decisions is a key piece of the puzzle.

A tiny number of people shoplifted alcohol from our store. Did we make it harder for the 99.9% of people who weren’t stealing? Maybe cut our hours and make people prove they were not a shoplifter before we let them in? Of course not. We wanted to make it easier, not harder, for them to access our products.

As with any business, our customers were actually the boss—ultimately able to fire us for not doing our jobs to their satisfaction. I am your boss, and I want you to make it easier, not harder, for Ohioans to participate in democracy.

Please vote no on SB 153. Thank you for your time.