

Opponent Testimony for SB 153
Senate General Government Committee
May 26, 2025

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 153 and its companion House Bill 233. My name is Stacie Novelli and I am a lifelong Ohioan who believes strongly in democracy and the right to vote. I urge this committee to reject this unAmerican legislation which would fundamentally undermine voter participation in Ohio.

As a regular volunteer who enjoys helping to register voters, I'm concerned about SB 153 and HB 233 effectively eliminating voter registration drives. These drives help fill a critical role in ensuring all eligible Ohioans—especially historically marginalized communities, young voters, and those in rural areas—have the opportunity to register and participate in our democracy. For many, voter registration drives conducted at churches, campuses, community centers, and public events are the only accessible option. Eliminating these efforts would drastically suppress voter engagement across the state.

Equally troubling with regards to accessibility is the provision banning ballot drop boxes which are a safe, secure, and popular voting method used widely in our elections. Drop boxes offer a trusted option for voters who cannot or do not wish to rely on mail delivery, particularly in rural areas where postal service can be unreliable or in communities where working multiple jobs makes it difficult to reach a polling place during open hours. In 2020 and 2022, Ohioans across the political spectrum used drop boxes to cast their ballots securely. Banning them now is a solution in search of a problem, and it would only make voting less accessible and more difficult.

SB 153 also requires documentary proof of citizenship to register to vote, a measure that is not only unnecessary but deeply harmful. Ohio already has strong safeguards in place to ensure that only eligible U.S. citizens vote. Secretary of State Frank LaRose has said that Ohio is home to one of the most secure election systems in the nation. Adding this requirement is unjustified and would disproportionately affect naturalized citizens, seniors, students, low-income residents, and others who may not have immediate access to birth certificates or passports. Studies from other states show that such policies have led to the rejection or delay of legitimate registrations, even when applicants were fully eligible to vote.

Further, the bill increases reliance on provisional ballots by mandating their use when there is **any** mismatch in a voter's license information and forcing tens of thousands (*potentially hundreds of thousands*) of eligible voters to vote provisionally **and** go to the BMV to prove their identity before their vote can be counted. This burdensome requirement will cause confusion and discourage participation. It risks disenfranchising voters who may lack transportation, work flexible schedules, or simply not understand what's required of them.

The bill imposes these sweeping changes without offering additional resources, staffing, or training for local boards of elections. These new mandates would overwhelm already strained county election offices, increase error rates, and reduce public trust in the voting process—without improving security or election outcomes.

For all of these reasons—the unnecessary barriers to voter registration, the ban on ballot drop boxes, the imposition of proof of citizenship requirements, and the lack of support for election administrators—I respectfully urge you to reject SB 153 and HB 233. These bills would make it harder, not easier, for Ohioans to participate in their democracy without justification. Protecting the integrity of our elections means making them accessible, secure, and inclusive—not erecting barriers that solve no real problem while harming real people.

Thank you for your time and your commitment to the voters of Ohio.

Sincerely,
Stacie Novelli