



**Senate Bill 4 Opposition Testimony by Mia Lewis, Common Cause Ohio
Before the Senate General Government Committee on
June 17, 2025**

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Blackshear and members of the Senate General Government Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on Senate Bill 4.

My name is Mia Lewis, and I am the Associate Director of Common Cause Ohio. I am testifying in opposition to Senate Bill 4 codifying the Election Integrity Unit and the unnecessary increase in prosecutorial power and state overreach in voting and elections related investigations the bill would create.

Senate Bill 4 allocates state resources to ramp up the firepower available to combat virtually non-existent voter fraud, while doing nothing whatsoever to mitigate the very real problems of obstacles to the ballot faced by tens of thousands of eligible Ohio voters every year.

The image I'm left with is a person defending the front of a house with firepower galore to combat a single confused old lady – while the back door is left wide open and no one seems to care. Senate Bill 4 does not increase integrity in our elections, but actually undermines it in the following ways:

First, centralizing an "Election Integrity Unit" within the Secretary of State's office, a partisan elected position, creates a situation ripe for politically motivated investigations and selective prosecution. The bill introduces a mechanism for the general public to make allegations of voter fraud. This together with allowing the partisan position of SOS to have subpoena power is a bad combination. The new unit established by SB 4 could be used to target specific groups of voters or organizations, based on political agendas, rather than on genuine concerns of fraud.

It is interesting to note that, in 2024, while tens of thousands of registered voters were being questioned with voter challenges (after the state sanctioned roll maintenance procedure), the Secretary of State's Election Integrity Unit was silent. They did nothing to clarify and/or protect eligible voters. There was no official memo or directive guidance from the SOS office on how counties should handle mass challenges.

Senate Bill 4 also creates a duplication of resources. The Ohio Attorney General's office and local prosecuting attorneys have the authority and responsibility to investigate and prosecute election-related crimes. Creating a new unit duplicates these functions, potentially leading to

confusion, inefficiency, and a misallocation of taxpayer resources. Bipartisan county boards of elections are responsible for administering fair elections. County prosecutors often work closely with the Boards on discussing potential areas of investigation, and are thus best placed to make informed decisions about what is and is not worth pursuing. An Election Integrity Unity would undermine county-level authority and could cherry pick cases to investigate. We should focus on strengthening existing frameworks rather than creating redundant ones that may not improve actual election security.

Finally, sponsors of this bill often cite the need to combat "voter fraud." However, we all know that Ohio's elections are the gold standard for security and accuracy. Secretary LaRose consistently reports safe, secure and accurate election results. Even his investigations have shown that widespread voter fraud does not exist and occurrences are often accidental and always exceedingly rare. Our current system is designed to catch and address the limited cases that do occur. This bill appears to be a solution in search of a problem, and the potential negative consequences far outweigh any speculative benefits.

On a wider scale, a visible "Election Integrity Unit" with broad investigative powers could intimidate voters and election workers and create confusion and misuse since clear guidelines are not found in this bill. Eligible Ohioans, particularly those from historically marginalized communities, may become hesitant to register to vote, cast a ballot, or participate in voter registration drives if they fear unwarranted scrutiny or investigation. This would undermine, rather than strengthen, democratic participation and trust in our elections. How about we promote a Unit of Voter Assistance and Education instead? So much more pressing need...

All of this heavy firepower, when, according to the Heritage Foundation,¹ there have been just eight instances of convictions of election-related crimes since Secretary La Rose was elected, and only one of those convictions was for ineligible voting. (Twice as many were for duplicate voting – too bad we opted out of Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC), the best way to prevent voters from voting in multiple states.) Wouldn't you agree that 6 full-time staff for this new unit in the Secretary's office is perhaps overkill? Meanwhile, over 34,000 provisional ballots cast in November 2024 were rejected. Where's the energy and commitment of resources to voter education and access that would help ensure ALL eligible Ohio voters are able to cast their ballot and have it be counted? I can already see the huge and meaningful impact of the Unit of Voter Assistance and Education.

In sum, I urge this committee to reject Senate Bill 4 and instead focus on efforts that increase election access and security, such as investing in resources for local election officials and educating voters on election processes and their rights.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

¹ Data taken from the Heritage Foundation's "Election Fraud Map" for Ohio, <https://electionfraud.heritage.org/search?state=oh>