

Written Testimony in Opposition to Senate Bill 153

Submitted by Dr. Tana M. Schiewer

Ohio Resident

Chairman, Vice Chair, Ranking Member, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 153. As a nonprofit professional with years of experience working for justice organizations, I find SB153 to be not only an attack on citizens' rights but an affront to the participatory democratic process our country was founded on.

I oppose this bill because it is built on a false premise: that non-citizens are voting in large numbers in Ohio. Though this claim has repeatedly been disproven, certain actors have used these accusations as a smokescreen for laws that make voting harder, not safer.

This bill creates new barriers for thousands of eligible Ohioans—especially naturalized citizens, the elderly, students, and people returning from incarceration, who may not have immediate access to documents like passports or birth certificates. These are the same communities that already face disproportionate barriers to participation in civic life.

Election integrity is absolutely worth safeguarding; however, it is already under pressure in Ohio through practices that continually confuse and disenfranchise voters, endangering a long-standing practice in Ohio of prioritizing citizen action and participation. For example, in last year's vote on Issue 1, the official ballot summary language crafted by the office of Secretary of State Frank LaRose did not truthfully summarize the issue. In fact, it was deemed "stunningly deceptive" and intentionally misleading by watchdog groups. Rather than strengthening democracy, it sowed confusion—and this bill follows a similar pattern: purporting to protect the vote while effectively raising hurdles.

Rather than restricting access, Ohio should be investing in civic education, modern election systems, and fair policies that strengthen voter confidence by expanding participation—not narrowing it. Ohio should be a beacon of freedom in a dark time of democracy under attack, not another example of "leadership" legislating away our voice in the process.

This bill does not protect democracy; it limits it. I urge the committee to reject Senate Bill 153.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Tana M. Schiewer