

Opponent Testimony on Ohio Senate Bill 153

Chair, Vice Chair, Ranking and members of the Committee — thank you for the opportunity to testify in opposition to Senate Bill 153.

My name is Jean Henderson, and I am a volunteer with several non-partisan organizations with the purpose of registering voters. I have worked for years to register voters and help ensure that every eligible Ohioan has fair and equal access to the ballot box. I am here today because SB 153 would move our state in the opposite direction.

This bill creates unnecessary hurdles for citizens who want to register and vote. It requires every voter to prove citizenship with specific documents — many of which people do not readily have. Young voters, seniors, naturalized citizens, and low-income Ohioans and women are especially at risk of being delayed or denied the right to vote simply because of paperwork barriers or slow government systems.

The bill also expands the use of database checks to flag “apparent non-citizens.” We know from past experience that databases are not perfect — small errors like typos or missing digits can trigger false matches and innocent mismatches could lead to canceled registrations, provisional ballots that go uncounted, or even referrals for criminal investigation. **No Ohioan should face a felony risk for a clerical error.**

Equally troubling, SB 153 bans secure ballot drop boxes unless they are fully staffed and located right at the board of elections. **Drop boxes have proven to be safe**, convenient, and widely used — especially by working voters, seniors, and people with disabilities. Taking that option away is not election security; it is voter suppression.

Finally, this bill makes it harder for independent candidates, small businesses, and citizen groups to get on the ballot. It adds layers of paperwork, disclosure rules, and technical traps that could invalidate petitions for minor mistakes.

In short, SB 153 would make it harder — not easier — for eligible citizens to participate in our democracy. Instead of creating barriers, we should be focused on improving access, ensuring accuracy, and encouraging civic engagement across all communities.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to reject Senate Bill 153. Thank you for your time and for your service to the people of Ohio.

Jean Henderson

Cincinnati, Ohio