

October 27, 2025

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

My name is David Benson and I am from Aurora. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

I am a concerned Ohioan and an Ohio polling official, and I am writing to express my opposition to SB 153. The cornerstone of our democracy rests on our foundational right to vote. I agree that only American citizens should be allowed to register to vote and cast their votes in our elections but current law already exists to ensure this. Anyone who is not eligible to vote is flagged and prevented from casting a ballot. I know, I am in the trenches.

SB 153 requires that anyone who wants to register to vote or update their voter registration must do so in person at their board of elections yet provides no funding for the extra staffing this would require. This bill will make it harder for a wide swath of people to register to vote and cast their ballot in elections. In addition to making registration more difficult, this bill excessively targets the ability to cast votes for Ohioans who have changed their name, which includes already marginalized populations like women and queer and transgender or gender diverse Ohioans.

In December, Sec. LaRose told reporters that lawmakers should consider expanding early in-person voting locations. Expanding voting access is found nowhere in this 200 page bill, but instead, drop boxes would be eliminated and election officials would spend untold time inspecting who is on the rolls, regardless of who actually votes. And with the elimination of drop boxes this bill also proposes, additional voters, equal to the numbers using the drop boxes, would walk through the BOE doors.

Given that SB 153 requires the driver's license name to match the voter registration name exactly, if a voter's middle name is spelled out on their driver's license, but is only an initial on their voter registration, they will need to make a trip to the BOE to correct it. This will catch many voters off guard causing them to vote provisionally which will cause an additional rush of people to the BOE to cure ballots (many do not if their candidate lost or won by large margins) or as proposed in SB 153 no longer be registered to vote.

As the BOE is only open, Monday the Friday from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm, staff will be dealing with a lot of unhappy people waiting in line. SB 153 does not make our elections more secure it merely makes it harder for those already following our election laws to vote.

The Secretary of State has said our election accuracy is already at 99.9%. SB 153 is unnecessary and puts an undue burden on both the board of elections and our citizens. Please vote no on SB 153.

SB 153 would disenfranchise tens if not hundreds of thousands of eligible Ohio voters, add unnecessary, unfunded mandates for Boards of Elections (BOEs), and hinder Ohioans' right to direct democracy. Ohio's democratic processes are already safe, secure, and accurate. The provisions do not solve public policy problems; they only create additional barriers to civic engagement and increase burdens on already overworked and under resourced BOEs.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely, David Benson

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