

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is Gene Powell, and I am a lifelong Ohio resident and voter residing in Perrysburg, Ohio. I am writing in strong opposition to Senate Bill 153, known as the “SAVE Act.”

This bill would erect new and unnecessary barriers between eligible citizens and the ballot box. Requiring “documentary proof of citizenship” sounds harmless, but in practice it denies registration to people who lack immediate access to birth certificates, naturalization papers, or other records—documents that can take weeks or months (and fees) to obtain. Seniors, students, naturalized citizens, and married women whose legal names differ across documents will be disproportionately harmed.

The bill’s “exact match” requirement invites clerical error to decide who can vote. Minor differences—middle initials, nicknames, hyphenated names, address changes—would force thousands to cast provisional ballots and risk having those votes thrown out entirely.

SB 153 also criminalizes routine civic activity. By targeting petition circulators and banning ballot drop boxes, it undermines Ohio’s proud tradition of direct democracy and voter participation. These provisions will chill free speech and make it harder for citizens to place issues on the ballot or return absentee ballots safely and conveniently.

Ohio’s elections are already secure. County boards of elections verify registrations, signatures, and IDs under bipartisan oversight. SB 153 adds bureaucracy, not security. It shifts the burden of proof from the state to the citizen and threatens to purge lawful voters for paperwork errors.

Voting should be simple, safe, and fair for every eligible Ohioan. This bill moves us in the opposite direction.

I respectfully urge the Committee to reject SB 153 and instead focus on measures that expand participation, reduce administrative costs, and strengthen confidence in our elections by inclusion—not exclusion.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Gene Powell
Perrysburg