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Interested Party Testimony on SB 153
Senate General Government Committee
October 27, 2025

Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Blackshear, and members of the Senate General Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide written-only interested party testimony in consideration of Senate Bill 153 (SB 153), a bill that would make significant changes to Ohio's voting laws. Disability Rights Ohio (DRO) is the state's protection and advocacy system that advocates for Ohioans with disabilities, including access to the right to vote.

DRO has extensive experience working with disabled voters, helping them understand their rights to vote, how to access polling locations, and helping individuals navigate the voting process. Part of our work includes going into settings like jails, nursing homes, and psychiatric hospitals to educate individuals on how to vote within those settings. DRO provides resources to the public to help individuals understand the various directives, voting laws, and changes in voting systems. Additionally, every election, DRO hosts a voter hotline for disabled voters to call our office when assistance is needed in accessing this vital right.

Because of this work, DRO brings a unique perspective to SB 153, its impacts, and how certain changes could have a disproportionate impact on disabled voters in Ohio. Specifically, this testimony will cover three (3) parts of SB 153:

- 1. Elimination of Drop Boxes;**
- 2. Proof of Citizenship Requirements; and**
- 3. Attestation Requirements and Assisting with Returning Absentee Ballots.**

ELIMINATION OF DROP BOXES

- In Ohio, in the 2024 presidential election, 188,000 Ohioans utilized ballot drop boxes, 7% of those who voted early
- People with disabilities face barriers to voting with transportation being one of the largest
- Eliminating drop boxes exacerbates this barrier to voting, especially in rural areas where individuals must travel longer distances to vote in-person
- There should be an effort to expand access to voting, especially for disabled voters. Instead of eliminating drop boxes, the legislature should be expanding the number of drop

boxes so those who do not live close to a board of elections facility are able to easily cast their ballot, provisions that exist in states like Georgia, Kentucky, and Utah

PROOF OF CITIZENSHIP REQUIREMENTS

- The legislature has already established law that would require individuals to have a state issue ID when voting; this narrowed what forms of ID would be allowed
- This change had a disproportionate impact on disabled voters as 7.5% of people with disabilities do not have a state-issued photo ID
- Adding an additional requirement to provide proof of citizenship if their name is changed would be an additional barrier for disabled voters especially those who are married
- Retrieving documents to provide proof of citizenship is a cumbersome process that would require an individual obtaining a birth certificate
- Transportation is already a frequent barrier for disabled voters to get to locations that provide these proof-of-citizenship documents. People with disabilities often must schedule transportation out weeks in advance
- If someone is recently married, changes their name, and needs to update their voting registration, this new requirement would become a major barrier to accessing their right to vote

ATTESTATION REQUIREMENTS AND ASSISTING WITH RETURNING ABSENTEE BALLOTS

- The proposed bill's language mirrors the absentee ballot return procedure/attestation requirement that Secretary LaRose put forth in his August 31 Directive to Boards of Election (BOE), which requires individuals assisting a disabled voter with their absentee ballot to enter the BOE and sign an attestation form
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- Many voters with disabilities rely on assistance to return their absentee ballots due to transportation barriers, mobility limitations, and potential health concerns
- This new process will add an additional barrier to voting for people with disabilities. Voting in Ohio already has several barriers, especially for disabled voters, adding this new requirement would make it more difficult to access voting for disabled voters

Voting is a right that should be protected and expanded. SB 153 does the opposite. It creates unnecessary barriers to accessing a fundamental right all of which disproportionately impact disabled voters. This is a clear example of policy being formed without being informed by disabled Ohioans. The legislature should work to expand access to voting and making systems easier for disabled voters to navigate, not a harder more inaccessible process.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this interested party testimony in consideration of SB 153 and the impacts this legislation would have on access to voting for people with disabilities. If you have any questions or wish to discuss these issues further, do not hesitate to reach out to Jordan Ballinger, Policy Director at jballinger@disabilityrightsohio.org or (614) 466-7264 x135.