

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

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Kate Louagie. I am a Political Science, Philosophy, and International Studies major at Miami University and a proud resident of the West Chester area. I am strongly opposed to SB 153.

As a college student, I am painfully aware of the low voter registration and turnout among the voting bloc of 18-25 year olds, especially during non-presidential election cycles. In 2023, our student newspaper reported that out of the three student housing precincts, only 1,720 people said they were registered to vote, and only 76 of those registered students actually voted. Our student population hovers around 18,000 students at the Oxford campus each year, with roughly 7,000 students living in student housing at any given time. This constitutes less than 25% of that demographic being registered to vote, and about 1.6% actually voting in an “off-year” election. I think it would be obvious to all members of the committee that rates that low are incredibly problematic for maintaining a representative democracy.

Our voting rates are typically higher in Presidential years, as they are across the country, but that is largely due to the national scope of the election. As I’ve demonstrated with the previous figures, many students are not registered to vote – at least in Ohio – and fewer are convinced that their vote matters in this state. In my interactions with my peers, I’ve heard many reasons for their lack of registration and non-voting tendencies, but the most prevalent (by a landslide) is that the voting registration system is confusing and helplessly encumbered by red tape. If they don’t have a Real ID, many students don’t have easy access to the substitute documentation either because it is states away with their parents or because the name on their driver’s license is different from their birth certificate or social security profile. SB 153, while trying to maintain election security (an important facet of democracy), disproportionately restricts student voting, which will exacerbate the current problems of low turnout on college campuses across the state. Our students already feel like they do not have any influence over the state government that is supposed to represent them, and this bill does not amplify their voices, rather, it restricts them. Students should be encouraged and supported in their desires to vote, not punished for red tape in a system controlled by older generations.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify on behalf of many of my peers across the state. I urge you to remember the students this will affect as you deliberate over the matter. Please, consider my testimony and vote *NO* on this needlessly cumbersome bill.