

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 Bob McCollister. I am a retired teacher and a football coach, and currently a member of the Lawrence County Board of Elections. I am strongly opposed to SB 153.

The most important question to answer is why are we here today? Why does this bill exist? Every study ever done has shown that voting by non-citizens is vanishingly rare. The Brennan Center for Justice calculates the rate at .0001%. In 2020, after an investigation into alleged noncitizen voting, the Ohio secretary of state Frank LaRose referred 104 cases of alleged noncitizen voter registration and 13 cases of alleged noncitizen voting for prosecution. Assuming the truth of the latter figure, noncitizen ballots cast would have amounted to .00016 percent of the ballots cast during the primary and general that year. Ohio's own Secretary of State Frank LaRose admitted that "voter fraud is exceedingly rare."

If voting by non-citizens is so rare why are we making it so much harder for people to register and vote? Why are we making it harder for women to vote if they change their name when they get married? Why are we making it harder for people to vote if they rent, and move more often than people who own their home? Why are we banning drop boxes when I do not know of a single case where they have been tampered with?

The answer seems to be that this is a targeted attempt to reduce turnout among certain groups of Ohioans. Minorities, women, students will be most affected. It will make voter registration drives more difficult. It will make placing referendums on the ballot more difficult. That also seems to be the clear intent of this legislation.

Finally it will add additional burdens to our County Boards of Elections. Longer lines to register voters in person. It will mean we will have to process far more provisional ballots each election. It will probably require us to hire more staff. All of this without any new funding.

In the Jim Crow era the way Blacks in the South were denied the right to vote was done primarily through controlling the registration process. It is imperative that Ohio not repeat that history, even if a more limited way.