

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 Deborah Phelan. I am writing as a concerned citizen, parent and community member from Pepper Pike, Ohio. I have voted in every election since I was 18 years old and feel that the right to vote is a basic right of being a citizen of the United States. I respectfully urge you to oppose SB153. I believe this bill will harm eligible voters, create unnecessary barriers to participation, and undermine trust in our democratic process.

SB 153's proposed citizenship verification procedures are not only redundant—given existing safeguards—but also risk disenfranchising thousands of eligible Ohioans. Many citizens, particularly seniors, naturalized citizens, students, and low-income residents, may lack immediate access to the specific documents required. This could lead to wrongful challenges, delays, and confusion at the polls.

Our elections should be secure, but they must also be accessible. The right to vote is the foundation of our democracy, and any legislation that makes it harder for eligible citizens to exercise that right should be approached with extreme caution. SB 153 addresses a problem that data shows is exceedingly rare, while creating new problems that will affect real people in our communities.

I urge you to reject SB 153 and instead focus on measures that strengthen both election security and voter access—such as improving poll worker training, expanding voter education, and modernizing registration systems.

Thank you for your time and for considering the voices of those who will be directly impacted by this legislation.

Respectfully,

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