



OHIO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Rick Carfagna, Senior Vice President
Ohio Chamber of Commerce
Interested Party Testimony – Senate Bill 153
October 28, 2025

Good afternoon, Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Blackshear, and Members of the Senate General Government Committee and thank you for the opportunity to provide Interested Party testimony on Senate Bill 153. My name is Rick Carfagna, and I am the Senior Vice President of Government Affairs for the Ohio Chamber.

For 132 years, the Ohio Chamber has served as the state's leading business advocate and represents over 8,000 companies that do business in Ohio. Our mission is to aggressively champion free enterprise, economic competitiveness, and growth for the benefit of all Ohioans.

We recognize that Senate Bill 153 is comprehensive legislation addressing voter registration, citizenship verification, provisional voting, absentee voting, and petition circulation procedures. Our testimony today focuses specifically on the election petition reforms contained in the bill. The Ohio Chamber is not taking a position on the other provisions of this legislation.

We commend Senators Gavarone and Brenner for their leadership on these important issues. Ballot reform has long been a public policy priority of the Ohio Chamber of Commerce, including ensuring that laws prescribing the petition circulation process are clear and transparent, and reinforcing laws governing the ballot issues petition process.

Ohio's ballot petition process affects businesses and citizens alike. When petition circulators operate without sufficient oversight or transparency, the integrity of our democratic process suffers. The Ohio Chamber supports measures that ensure petition circulation is conducted fairly, transparently, and in accordance with clear rules.

SB 153 includes several common-sense reforms to the petition circulation process. First, the bill requires paid petition circulators to wear identification badges, clearly informing voters when they are interacting with someone being compensated to collect signatures. This simple transparency measure helps voters make informed decisions about whether to sign.

Next, SB 153 requires circulators to consent to Ohio's legal jurisdiction, ensuring they can be reached if questions arise about petition validity. This addresses a real problem when out-of-state circulators leave Ohio before verification is complete.

For far too long, the Ohio Constitution has been an easy target for those seeking to enact anti-business policies or further narrow special interest initiatives outside of the traditional legislative process. Ohioans deserve to know who is funding signature collection efforts, and SB 153 will extend disclosure requirements for petition management firms beyond just statewide petitions to all petitions with paid circulators.

Finally, SB 153 codifies specific factors that invalidate petitions, such as the failure to wear required badges or file mandatory disclosures, which creates certainty for all parties and reduces costly litigation. The additional requirement for circulators to personally indicate the number of signatures collected will also prevent manipulation and ensure accurate reporting.

Most importantly, these reforms do not prevent Ohioans from exercising their constitutional right to the initiative and referendum process. As you are aware, Ohio is one of just 18 states that permit citizen-initiated constitutional amendments. 16 of those 18 states (including Ohio) allow for "direct constitutional initiatives" where a proposed amendment goes to voters on the statewide ballot, and 2 states have "indirect constitutional initiative" where a proposed amendment goes instead to the state legislature for consideration. The reforms under SB 153 simply ensure these processes operate with appropriate transparency and accountability, values the statewide business community strongly support.

Chair Roegner and members of this committee, thank you again for your consideration of Senate Bill 153. The Ohio Chamber believes these provisions will strengthen public confidence in Ohio's petition process while maintaining access to the ballot for legitimate initiatives.