

Ohio Senate General Government Committee

Testimony of Maretha J. Sweterlitsch

Opponent on SB 293

November 5, 2025

Good morning, Chair Roegner, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Blackshear, and members of the Senate General Government Committee. My name is Martha Sweterlitsch and I am presenting testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 293.

I'm an almost retired attorney and have practiced law for 41 years. I am 80 years old and for more than 50 of those years, I have volunteered for political campaigns, circulated petitions for issues and candidates, advocated for voter rights and been a poll observer for 25 years. This year I am serving on the Yes 4 Westerville school income tax committee, responsible for informing older voters about the levy and the needs of our school district. I know a little something about voting and voters.

VOTING SHOULD BE EASY! Let me repeat: VOTING SHOULD BE EASY AND ACCESSIBLE. As you well know, many seniors vote by absentee ballot. It is easy, private and accessible for those for whom driving is a lost privilege and leaving home at all is difficult. Now that the law restricts who can deliver an absentee ballot to the Board of Elections getting an absentee ballot returned has become more fraught. Many voters rely on the US Postal Service which is a lifeline for many people. But we know that lack of funding and reduced staffing have made the postal service less efficient and mail often takes longer than we would like to reach its destination. Voters cannot do anything about that. Neither can they make the service deliver their absentee ballot to their homes sooner or solve the problem of no one authorized to deliver their ballot to the BOE. Therefore, they must rely on the US Mail if they are to vote. HB 293 makes it more likely that valid votes will not be counted. Votes from places with slow mail delivery. Votes from older people in nursing homes and assisted living facilities, votes from voters with no family to assist them, taxpayers who worked hard and exercised their constitutional right to vote for their entire adult lives.

There is no valid rationale for shortening the time period during which an absentee ballot must arrive at the BOE to be counted. If it were up to me, I would add a few days...to make up for the losses at the postal service. This is NOT a voter fraud prevention measure. I would be remiss if I failed to note that voter fraud is almost nonexistent in this state or anywhere in the United States. Waiting 5 days to count votes clearly cast on or before election day is neither a hardship nor an invitation to fraud. It is voter suppression plain and simple and it will affect the rights of the most vulnerable of our citizens and erode their faith in our government.

I can only ask why a legislator would support this. I am truly puzzled to understand what is gained by a measure that makes it harder for the elderly, the disabled and ordinary hard working Americans to vote. Is that really the legacy this General Assembly seeks?