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# OHIO LEGISLATIVE SERVICE COMMISSION

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H.B. 472  
(1\_136\_3353-2)  
136<sup>th</sup> General Assembly

## Fiscal Note & Local Impact Statement

[Click here for H.B. 472's Bill Analysis](#)

**Version:** In Senate General Government

**Primary Sponsors:** Reps. Cockley and Salvo

**Local Impact Statement Procedure Required:** Yes

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### Highlights

- The Secretary of State will incur significant costs either to create in house or contract with an IT vendor to make and maintain a secure online portal allowing for the submission of absent voter ballot applications according to the bill's specifications.
- County boards of elections will incur administrative costs to process absent voter ballot applications under the bill's photo ID requirements.
- The bill requires the Secretary of State, the Registrar of Motor Vehicles, county boards of elections, and public libraries to provide copies of photo IDs for the purposes of absent voting, free of charge.
- The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) and local boards of health will experience a decrease in revenue related to providing free birth certificates to individuals experiencing homelessness. Total losses will depend on the number of qualified individuals seeking a birth certificate, as well as the fees charged by individual local boards.
- The Children's Trust Fund (Fund 1980) and the Family Violence Prevention Fund (Fund 5BK0) will also experience decreases in revenues, as certain portions of birth certificate fees are deposited in these funds. Again, total losses will depend on the number of individuals who obtain a certificate for free.
- The Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV) may incur a minimal loss in revenue to provide state ID cards at no cost for individuals under the age of 17 who are experiencing homelessness.
- Probate courts and clerks of the courts of common pleas may incur a minimal loss in fee revenue to provide copies of certified abstracts of marriage; certificates of divorce,

annulment, or dissolution; and certified records of a name to persons experiencing homelessness.

## **Detailed Analysis**

### **Absent voting provisions**

#### **Absent voting**

The bill generally requires voters to provide photo ID to vote by mail, with certain specified exceptions, beginning with the November 2027 general election. The bill also requires the Secretary of State (SOS) to establish a secure online portal for electors to apply for absent voter's ballots, beginning with this election and generally specifying the operating parameters of the portal. The bill also outlines the procedures for county boards of elections to adhere to these ID requirements with respect to voters that request an absent voter's ballot through a method other than the SOS portal.

#### **Absent voter ballots**

The bill requires the Secretary of State (SOS) to establish a secure online portal for electors to apply for absent voter ballots, beginning September 3, 2027. The creation of this portal will result in significant costs to the SOS. The IT development costs hinge on the work involved with incorporating the required capabilities under the bill. The bill specifies that voters opting to use the portal must provide two forms of identification, including options for live capture of the voter's photo ID and electronic capture of the voter's signature. The portal is required to support all current types of absent voter ballot applications, including those for uniformed services and overseas and disabled voters. These requirements appear to significantly increase the costs of creating this portal. If the SOS contracts with a vendor to develop and support the portal, there would also be ongoing support, licensing, and other related costs for the maintenance of this portal.

County boards of elections (BOEs) will incur some administrative costs to adhere to the bill's ID requirements applying to voters who request an absent voter ballot through a method other than the newly created SOS portal. The bill generally requires voters, with certain exceptions, who apply to vote by mail to provide photo ID at the time of application. This is accomplished through providing a copy of ID with the application or showing ID at the board of elections when applying in person. The bill also requires that voters who do not show ID at the time of application provide a copy of the ID with the voted ballot or show photo ID in person at the board of elections by the fourth day after the election. This may result in some delays in certifying the results of an election. During the November 6, 2024 general election, there were 983,565 absent voter ballots requested, and 914,858 returned.

#### **Free copies of photo IDs**

The bill requires the SOS, Registrar of Motor Vehicles (excluding deputy registrars), county boards of elections, and public libraries to provide copies of IDs, free of charge, to any voter that makes a request for one in person, for voting by mail. Presumably, public libraries and county boards of elections would handle the largest number of requests for copies of identification, although it is unclear how many such requests would be made at these locations.

## **Birth certificate and ID fee provisions**

The bill eliminates fees (1) for copies of birth certificates issued to individuals experiencing homelessness, (2) for state identification (ID) cards issued to individuals under the age of 17 experiencing homelessness, and (3) for copies of certified abstracts of marriage; certificates of divorce, annulment, or dissolution; and certified records of a name change. It also eliminates fees for duplicate or reprint ID cards for these same individuals. However, the bill limits the number of fee waivers for these documents to one per year, per document. The bill also permits a homeless shelter or nonprofit agency that provides case management services to people experiencing homelessness to securely store a physical or digital copy of their client's Social Security card or birth certificate, with client consent. These documents must be destroyed, deleted, or returned to the client upon request.

### **Ohio Department of Health (ODH) and local boards of health**

As stated above, the bill eliminates all fees for a certified birth record, a certification of birth, or a replacement birth record for individuals experiencing homelessness who have not received such a fee waiver in the last 12 months. In order for the fee to be waived, one of the following must verify that an individual is experiencing homelessness: a government or nonprofit agency that provides services to such individuals; a school social worker, counselor, or local educational agency liaison for homeless children and youths; a federal TRIO program or Gaining Early Awareness Readiness for Undergraduate Program; or a financial aid administrator for an institution of higher education. Additionally, local boards of health, local courts, and the Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV) must annually report to ODH the number of individuals who have received a fee waiver, delineated by the type of document. ODH is required to compile this information and submit an annual report to the General Assembly and make it available on ODH's website.

ODH and local boards of health will experience a decrease in revenue to provide free birth certificates to individuals experiencing homelessness. Local boards of health, local courts, the BMV, and ODH may also realize a minimal increase in administrative costs related to the bill's reporting requirements. Total losses regarding birth certificate revenue will depend on the number of qualified individuals seeking a birth certificate under the bill, as well as the additional fees charged by local boards. Impacts will also depend on how an individual obtains a free birth certificate – either directly from the Bureau of Vital Statistics or from the local department/office. The Children's Trust Fund (Fund 1980) under the Department of Children and Youth (DCY) and the Family Violence Prevention Fund (Fund 5BK0) under the Department of Public Safety (DPS) will also experience decreases in revenues, as portions of birth certificate fees are deposited into these funds. The following sections provide a description of vital certificate revenue and disposition, as well as homelessness statistics.

### **Vital certificate fee structure**

There are currently three options for obtaining a certified copy of a birth certificate: online, by mail, or in person. For the first two methods, the state Bureau of Vital Statistics charges a total fee of \$21.50. Individuals who obtain a copy by going to one of the local boards of health may pay a higher fee amount, as boards are permitted to establish fees in excess of \$21.50 to cover their costs. As a result, the fees charged for going in person to obtain a copy varies by local boards. The Ohio Revised Code requires certain portions of vital certificate fees to be used for

several purposes, including providing funding for the Children’s Trust Fund and the Family Violence Prevention Fund. The table below provides a breakdown of the fee.

**Vital Certificate Fee<sup>1</sup> (Local Fees Not Included)**

Vital record certification fee*	\$12.00
Vital statistics modernization and operations fee	\$5.00
Children’s Trust Fund**	\$3.00
Family Violence Prevention Fund**	\$1.50
<b>Total Vital Certificate Fee</b>	<b>\$21.50</b>

\*Local offices may retain \$8 of this fee.

\*\*Local offices may retain 3%.

The vital record certification fee, which is at least \$12, must be collected for each certificate issued. If the certificate is issued by the state Bureau of Vital Statistics, this fee is deposited into the General Operations Fund (Fund 4700), used by ODH. The Ohio Revised Code requires a local office to forward \$4 of this fee for each certificate it issues to ODH. ODH is required to use this portion to support public health systems. If the fee is collected by a local board, \$1 of this amount is to be used by ODH to pay subsidies to local boards of health. Local offices may retain the remaining \$8, and as mentioned above, may charge an additional fee to cover their own administrative costs.

There is also a \$5 fee to support the operations and modernization of the vital records program. A local board is required to forward all revenues it collects to ODH from this portion of the overall fee. Funds forwarded by the local boards or collected directly from the Bureau of Vital Statistics are deposited into Fund 4700 as well.

Additionally, there is a \$3 fee for the benefit of the Children’s Trust Fund (Fund 1980), which funds programs designed to prevent child abuse and neglect under DCY. Lastly, there is a \$1.50 fee for the benefit of the Family Violence Prevention Fund (Fund 5BK0), which is to be used by DPS to provide grants to family violence shelters and to operate the Division of Criminal Justice Services. Local offices may retain up to 3% of each of these two fees for administrative purposes.

Losses to the Bureau of Vital Statistics will be realized in ODH’s General Operations Fund (Fund 4700). Losses to local boards of health will include the \$8 that may be retained from the certification fee as well as any additional fee that a local board may charge. ODH’s General Operations Fund is also used to provide subsidies to local boards of health, so any reduction in the fund could also impact local boards. There are over 100 vital statistics offices located in the state, according to ODH’s Registrar Directory.<sup>2</sup> The majority of the offices charge \$25, but fees generally range from between \$22 and \$32. If a local board of health charges \$25, it retains

<sup>1</sup> R.C. 3109.14, 3705.24, and 3705.242 and Ohio Administrative Code (O.A.C.) 3701-5-03.

<sup>2</sup> See the ODH [Registrar Directory \(PDF\)](#). However, this document was last updated in April 2025. Some local offices have updated their fee schedules since this publication.

\$11.50 and forwards \$13.50 to the state. Thus, a local board charging \$25 would lose \$11.50 for any free birth certificates issued in accordance with the bill's provisions.<sup>3</sup>

### **Homelessness statistics**

The magnitude of potential revenue loss will depend on the number of individuals who will qualify under the bill to receive a birth certificate for free. However, it is difficult to come up with an estimate regarding the number of Ohioans who experience homelessness each year and the number of these individuals who would seek a free birth certificate.

The 2024 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report to Congress (AHAR), from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (U.S. HUD), found that on a single night in January 2024, nearly 11,800 Ohioans experienced either sheltered or unsheltered homelessness.<sup>4</sup> Since this data is a point-in-time estimate, it does not capture the total number of people experiencing homelessness each year. The unsheltered homeless population may be undercounted due to the difficulty in locating these individuals, as well as the capacity for local communities to conduct the unsheltered count. Additionally, the AHAR does not count individuals who are temporarily staying with family or friends, or those who are incarcerated or hospitalized. For these reasons, it is difficult to determine how many total individuals are experiencing homelessness and could potentially receive a birth certificate for free. To show the potential differences in point-in-time and annual data, Cuyahoga County's Strategic Action Plan for Homelessness, stated that in 2022, point-in-time data showed that almost 1,410 individuals experienced homelessness on a given night; however, the actual annual number estimated to experience homelessness in Cuyahoga County is about 5,000.<sup>5</sup> As a result, it is likely that many more Ohioans, than the number estimated in the AHAR data, could experience homelessness in a year. Because of this, it is difficult to determine how many individuals could qualify for free birth certificates.

### **Bureau of Motor Vehicles**

Under current law, state ID cards are provided by the BMV free of charge to individuals 17 and older, regardless of their living situation. By expanding eligibility to obtain a state ID card at no cost to include individuals under the age of 17 who are experiencing homelessness, the bill may result in a minimal loss in revenue that would otherwise have been collected for the issuance of each of those cards. The number of potential new cards that could be issued is negligible. According to the abovementioned AHAR, there were a total of 3,357 people in families with children in Ohio experiencing homelessness in 2024. The number of those who are under the age of 17 and would receive a free state ID card under the bill is indeterminate but is presumably a smaller subset of that total number.

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<sup>3</sup> LBO's local impact threshold is a "yes" if a county or city with a population over 5,000 has costs of \$5,000 or more. If a local board charged a fee of \$25 and provided about 435 free birth certificates, the loss of revenue could exceed this amount. This number of free birth certificates could perhaps happen in larger counties.

<sup>4</sup> See the [2024 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report to Congress \(PDF\)](#).

<sup>5</sup> See the [Cuyahoga County Strategic Action Plan for Homelessness \(PDF\)](#).

The BMV currently produces state ID cards at a cost of \$1.47 per card, and for individuals under the age of 17, collects a fee of \$10 (for a four-year state ID card) or \$19 (for an eight-year state ID card). State ID card fee revenue is credited to the Public Safety – Highway Purposes Fund (Fund 5TMO), which is used in part to pay the BMV's expenses related to titling motor vehicles, licensing drivers, and registering motor vehicles. The impact to the BMV and to Fund 5TMO will ultimately depend on the number of individuals under the age of 17 who are experiencing homelessness that seek to obtain a free state ID card.

The bill also eliminates the fees for duplicate or reprint state ID cards for individuals 17 or older who are experiencing homelessness. The fee to obtain such a card is \$9, however, the BMV does not currently charge a duplicate or reprint fee for this age group regardless of their living situation.

### **Courts of common pleas**

The bill requires fees for (1) a copy of a certified abstract of marriage, (2) a certificate of divorce, annulment, or dissolution, and (3) a certified record of a name change to be waived if the record is requested by a person experiencing homelessness. Under continuing law, probate courts are authorized to collect \$2 for a copy of a certified abstract of marriage, and the clerk of the court of common pleas is authorized to collect a fee of \$2 for a certificate of divorce, annulment, or dissolution and \$1 for each page for copies of pleadings, process, record, or files, including certificate and seal. The number of individuals who would receive a fee waiver under the bill is indeterminate but is presumably low relative to all individuals requesting documents statewide. The resulting fee revenue loss and increase in administrative expenses to produce an annual report are expected to be minimal.