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Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Skindell, and members of the Senate Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today to urge you to include language in HB 49 to establish a state/county partnership for the replacement of Ohio's aging voting equipment.

I am Gary Lee, a Union County commissioner since 2003. I served as president of CCAO in 2013 and I am a 15-year veteran of the Union County board of elections prior to my election as commissioner. During my year as president I worked with the Ohio Association of Election Officials [OAEI] to establish a joint committee on the administration of elections. We were pleased to have Secretary of State Jon Husted join us to begin conversations on election issues. After several productive meetings, we agreed that the replacement of our aging election equipment was our number one priority.

Our first mission was to find a way to fund the electronic poll books. Through the efforts of the State Legislature in the last state budget bill, the Secretary, and our committee, we forged a partnership in which the state appropriated \$12 million to reimburse the counties for 85% of their costs to purchase the electronic poll books. The program also allowed flexibility to those counties that had already stepped up and previously purchased the poll books. This program has been hugely successful and widely appreciated and we are very grateful for the positive partnership that was established.

After that was accomplished, all of us turned our attention to the replacement of aging election equipment and the 2020 Presidential election. After many meetings and hours of work and discussion with the Legislature, Administration, and particularly OBM and DAS, we developed a plan. DAS initially interviewed vendors and secured state term pricing for the elections equipment that is currently available. The Secretary of State is currently reviewing the state term pricing information. The Secretary next plans to issue a directive instructing the Boards of Elections to work with their Commissioners to develop a statement of intent as to what the county would like to purchase. Those figures will be returned to the SOS three weeks after the directive is issued. This effort will give all of us a handle on the statewide cost for the replacement of our voting equipment.

We fully realize that this is a multi-year effort to get all counties up-graded. Our preference is to start to seed the program in this year's operating budget coupled with a description of what the state/county purchasing partnership may look like in the future. We understand the Administration is interested in capital dollars, perhaps in next year's capital budget bill. We appreciate a partnership -maybe a blend of dollars - as capital dollars can help with purchasing going forward and operating dollars could help with reimbursement, just like the electronic poll book program, as well as for counties looking to lease equipment.

The House included a \$1 M capital appropriation to be used to reimburse counties that have entered into agreements for new voting equipment on or after January 1, 2014, for up to 50 percent of their acquisition costs. It also provides that no reimbursement to a county is to exceed \$250,000, which the sponsor intended to apply to that initial \$1 million included in the bill. The bill also requires DAS to issue an RFP, selecting no more than three vendors, for purposes of creating a unified statewide purchasing program or leasing plan for voting equipment. Finally, the House provision includes a statement of intent that the General Assembly intends to provide additional funding to counties for voting equipment by SFY 19 in a similar manner as outlined above. CCAO and OAEO appreciate the addition by the House of funds to reimburse counties who have had to purchase voting equipment.

We respectfully ask that the Senate further refine the House provision to:

- Increase the appropriation to \$7 M, which would fully reimburse forward thinking counties who have already replaced their voting equipment.
- Provide a partnership ratio between the state and counties which is closer to that of electronic poll books, which was an 85/15 split.
- More clearly pronounce the intent of the General Assembly to complete replacement of all elections equipment prior to the 2020 presidential election and commit funding for this replacement over a several year period that most effectively accomplishes this goal.

We hope that the Finance Committee appreciates the fact that we all understand that state dollars are extremely tight, but that we are looking to define this state/county partnership and seed it in this current budget that you are now considering.

Once again thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to appear before this committee today to address this important issue. I would be glad to answer any questions that you may have.