



**Opponent Testimony of Molly Shack, Ohio Organizing Collaborative
Substitute House Bill 294
House Government Oversight Committee
December 1, 2022**

Chair Wilkin, Vice Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Brown and Members of the Ohio House Government Oversight Committee,

My name is Molly Shack and I serve as the Co-Executive Director of the Ohio Organizing Collaborative. The OOC is the largest community organizing group in the state, with a diverse coalition representing students, people of faith, parents, people directly impacted by the criminal legal system and care workers.

At the OOC, we know that the ability to make our voices heard in our democracy is the bedrock of building healthy, safe and equitable communities where all of our families can thrive.

I submit this testimony to emphasize our collective opposition to Substitute House Bill 294, that is the wrong direction for Ohio voters. Substitute House Bill 294 is full of harmful attacks on our freedom to vote. This legislation will do nothing to improve access to the ballot in Ohio or solve any of the many existing problems that create barriers to the ballot for Ohio voters.

There are many ways we could improve voting and elections in Ohio: same day registration, automatic voter registration, multiple early vote centers, additional drop boxes and so much more. None of the unnecessary voting restrictions in Sub House Bill 294 actually solve any problems, they simply make it harder to vote.

Some of the many harmful provisions we are most concerned with are

- Limiting the ability to send absentee ballot request forms or supporting voters with prepaid return postage.
 - Young voters and lower income voters often lack the information, experience and resources to navigate an excessively complicated absentee ballot process, we should be making it easier for government agencies along with colleges, churches, and community organizations to support voters accessing their right to vote, not make it harder.
- Eliminating the last day of early voting.
 - Preventing people from voting early the day before election day, on one of the busiest early vote days of the year, is like closing the mall on Christmas Eve.

Ohioans who realize they have a work, family or other barrier to casting their ballot on election day deserve an opportunity to make their voices heard.

- Limiting the number of drop boxes to 3 on the property of the board of elections.
 - We should be adding drop boxes, not codifying additional limitations on them. The idea that the same number of boxes for our most populous counties like Franklin that is rapidly growing with approximately 1.3 million people that Vinton county has with around 13,000 is completely disproportionate and blatantly discriminatory.
- Criminalizing unauthorized ballot returns
 - Rather than making the absentee ballot process more accessible to voters. Criminalizing a grandchild or pastor or neighbor for not understanding the ever-changing set of rules around voting process in Ohio will do nothing to make our votes more secure.
- Requires citizenship status to be listed on Ohio driver's licenses
 - This is entirely unrelated to the legislation being considered, that creates unnecessary information about immigrants citizenship status on their IDs and solves no voting related problems.

The OOC has worked for over a decade registering, educating and supporting voters learning how to make their voices heard in the election process. Countless times I have fielded questions from confused students, dispatched rides for elderly voters, and provided support for voters living with disabilities. This will do nothing to help them and only create more barriers.

This is a voter suppression bill. This is a bill that will disproportionately harm young voters, voters of color, and low income voters. This bill creates barriers to voting without making our elections more secure or more accessible. The OOC urges a no vote on Sub. HB 294, both in Committee and on the House floor.

Chair Wilkin and Members of the committee, thank you for considering our perspective and our recommendations. I and our affiliates would be happy to answer any questions if you have them.

Respectfully submitted,

Molly Shack
Co-Executive Director
Ohio Organizing Collaborative
molly@ohorganizing.org