**Proponent Testimony**

**Tim Ward**

**Ohio Association of Election Officials**

**HB 18**

Chairman Blessing, Ranking Member Clyde and members of the House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee:

My name is Tim Ward and I am testifying today as President of the Ohio Association of Election Officials (OAEO). I am here to offer proponent testimony for HB 18. I would like to thank Representative Pelanda for her willingness to work with the OAEO and the Secretary of State’s office to craft this well-conceived legislation.

The major issue addressed in HB 18 came to light in the 8th Congressional District when Speaker Boehner retired and a successor was to be elected. As you are likely aware, a special primary election was triggered and each party selected their candidate for the general election. The snafu occurred when one of these candidates dropped off the ballot and a replacement was needed. Only one candidate put their name forward. However, due to the wording of the ORC, a second election was required to be held to nominate that candidate. This election, in which only one candidate appeared on the ballot, cost tax payers over $400,000 to conduct. HB 18 fixes this glaring issue by removing the requirement to hold a special congressional primary where only one candidate will appear on the ballot.

OAEO is respectfully requesting the addition of an amendment to HB 18 to address a closely related issue that our members have identified with the Ohio Revised Code. It is not infrequent for only one candidate to **file** for a primary election. And the revised code is clear that in these instances, a board of elections can certify a candidate through to the general election without conducting a primary election. However, on occasion, multiple candidates file for a primary, but for one reason or another only one candidate is certified to the ballot. It could be that one of the candidates drops their candidacy after they file petitions, but before they are certified. Or more likely, they fall short of the necessary signatures to appear on the ballot. In these instances, boards are still required to conduct the primary even though only one candidate will appear on the ballot. This is because multiple candidates **filed** for the primary election. The amendment we are requesting would remedy this issue by stating that boards may cancel a primary if only one candidate is **certified** to the primary ballot as opposed to one candidate **filing** for the primary election. The amendment takes into account write in candidates and would still require a primary if the filing of a write in candidate triggers a multi-way contest. We have prepared language to achieve this change and would be happy to work with members of this committee to see it included in the bill.

In short, the goal of HB 18 is to save taxpayer dollars, and boards of election from unnecessary work and costs. It does so while protecting the right of citizens to vote in a special congressional primary IF there is more than one candidate to choose from. I urge your support of this very common sense legislation, and would be happy to answer any questions the committee may have.