Chairman Wiggam, Vice-Chairman Stephens, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the State and Local Government Committee, thank you for allowing me to provide proponent testimony on Senate Bill 194.

Not too long ago, I certified the official results of the 2020 election. It was the most secure and most accessible election in state history – and it resulted in the highest voter turnout in our state history. Every time we faced a new challenge, my team and hundreds of election officials from across Ohio were prepared. The mission I set out for our team more than a year ago has held true, Ohioans know and believe the results of our state's 2020 presidential election. But that doesn't mean we rest on our laurels. Instead, the reason we've become a national model for election administration is that we are always working to evolve and prepare. That's why I'm here today

Ohio's 88 county boards of elections are responsible for maintaining accurate voter rolls. However, for too long Ohio has allowed its voter registration databases to go without proper oversight and left the counties on their own to contract with vendors for these services. Since we are a "bottom-up" state, Ohio's eighty-eight county boards of elections are responsible for maintaining voter rolls and ensuring the security and accuracy of their data. To do this they contract with one of several vendors who offer voter registration database products and assist them in their use. It has become apparent that the lack of basic standards and protocols for voter registration systems has resulted in troubling security risks in other states that may also exist in Ohio.

The 2016 election changed how we view our vulnerabilities. No longer are we concerned with the hanging chads that plagued the 2000 election. Instead, the threat of foreign and domestic actors attacking our digital infrastructure is our biggest concern. This year we learned that two counties in Florida saw their voter registration databases infiltrated by foreign actors. The State of Illinois experienced a similar breach in 2016 that left 76,000 registrations vulnerable. No information was changed, but the attacks demonstrated that these vital systems are vulnerable and need to be secured.

We believe that this threat is real, and that it must be addressed. And, thankfully, there are steps that we can take to protect Ohio.

The Board of Voting Machine Examiners (BVME) is a bipartisan board made up of four members: two individuals appointed by the Secretary of State and one appointee from each chamber of the General Assembly, appointed by the leader of the opposite party

of the Secretary to ensure partisan balance. Currently, they are charged with certifying Ohio's voting machines, e-poll books, and ballot marking devices. Upon the passage of SB 194 this body would be renamed the Board of Voting *System* Examiners to better reflect its expanded mission.
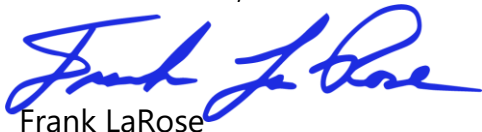
Senate Bill 194 will place voter registration systems within the purview of the BVME and, with the help of a newly appointed cyber security expert, allow for the creation of standards each vendor must meet before their products can be purchased by the counties. Our boards of elections are comprised of hard-working men and women, but the vast majority are not cyber security experts. When a vendor states their product is secure, the boards have no way to verify whether that is true. This bill will provide counties with much-needed help in ensuring the products they purchase are secure, accurate and reliable.

Since day one Secretary LaRose has prioritized cyber security through both directives and priority legislation. The office's cyber security directive, which is currently in effect, has been used by other states as the benchmark for security. A summary of that security directive has been provided to members of the committee. The directive includes important requirements such as network intrusion detection and response protocols, least privilege permissions to ensure that only those who need to access sensitive systems and information can do so, and network security and segmentation requirements to isolate and contain a potential intrusion.

Ohio has been at the forefront of election security for years. From requiring 100% paper ballots either voter-marked or voter-verified, to ensuring our voting machines are never connected to the Internet and mandating post-election audits, we have set an example for other states to follow. Now is the time to act to secure a critical and potentially vulnerable part of our elections.

Thank you, I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Yours in service,

Frank LaRose
Secretary of State