

Chairman Coley, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Craig, and members of the Senate Government Oversight Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Alaina Swope. I am a community organizer, an educator, and a nominee for State Representative in Muskingum and Guernsey counties. I am deeply concerned by HB 680 and strongly opposed to it in its current form.

I'm from a place called Zanesville, Ohio, which is a wonderful city with a rich abolitionist history. It's a city bursting with potential, yet almost a third of us live below the poverty line. It is a city divided in resources between the housing-rich and redlined north end, and the neglected south end. We have been neglected for a long time, long before COVID, which has only put gas on the flames of issues we've already been facing.

We don't have good jobs, we don't have affordable housing, several of us don't even have internet access. And during this public health crisis, it is the duty of our General Assembly and our Secretary of State to make it substantially *easier* to vote, yet I stand today before legislators who have somehow found the will to make it harder for Ohioans to vote safely in November.

Beyond being unethical to charge citizens a poll tax to vote, it's also based on the wrong assumption that our citizens have internet access to get a file for an absentee ballot request form, that they have a printer to print the form, that they have the extra money to afford postage to send it in. No voter should have to pay any amount to participate in our democracy. Secretary LaRose said himself that vote by mail is safe and secure, and I'm sure it's used by many of us in this room.

I came here today to ask that you remove the HB 680 language banning prepaid return postage on absentee ballots requests AND ballots AND remove language from current law that bans Boards of Elections from prepaying return postage. I'm asking that you add language clarifying that absentee ballots may be requested online. I'm asking that you add language clarifying that each county can have *multiple* secure drop boxes for ballot return. I'm asking that you add language clarifying that each county can have multiple early vote locations. I'm asking that you remove language that would *move up* the deadline for requesting absentee ballots to give voters adequate time to get their ballot in *and* I'm asking that you count ballots mailed on election day. Finally, I'm asking that you add language requiring the state to mail every Ohio voter an absentee ballot request form (including a prepaid return envelope!) before all future elections.

If these changes are not made, I ask you to consider my testimony and vote *NO* on this asinine and ignorant bill. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

I will now take any questions you may have.