

OHIO FAMILIES UNITE

FOR POLITICAL ACTION AND CHANGE

Chairman Wilkin, Vice Chair White, Ranking Member Brown, and members of the House Government Oversight Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to testify today. My name is Emily Cole, I use she/her pronouns, and I have the honor of serving as the Executive Director of Ohio Families Unite for Political Action and Change, or OFUPAC. OFUPAC was started by those most impacted by the criminalization of poverty, police brutality, incarceration and the criminal legal system here in Ohio. The families I represent rarely have a seat at the table yet so often are the voices most critical to the conversation at hand. They disproportionately bear the brunt of the legislative and policy decisions made in this space, given the criminalization of poverty inherent in Ohio's ever-expanding policing and incarceration systems. I am here today to stand for our families in opposition to House Bill 294 and humbly ask you to amend this bill.

While we are thrilled to support the inclusion of automated voter registration and online absentee ballot requests, we are concerned that the restrictive, anti-voter provisions *also* included in House Bill 294 will further limit Ohioans' ability to vote. We specifically oppose the provisions that will further limit the already poor access to ballot drop boxes, the confusing voter-ID requirements, shortening the absentee ballot request period, prohibiting prepaid postage, and canceling early voting the Monday before Election Day.

All of the aforementioned provisions would further restrict voting in all communities across Ohio, but particularly among those in lower income, minority, and rural communities. I personally spent hours at my local Board of Elections talking with early voters the Monday before Election Day. The lines of people voting early were so long they wrapped around the building. Restricting early voting restricts access to the ballot box for thousands of voters.

I ask you to consider my testimony and amend House Bill 294 to remove the proposed voter restrictions. All Ohioans deserve equal and open access to the ballot box.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Emily Cole
Executive Director
Ohio Families Unite for Political Action and Change
(703) 862-7322
ecole@ofupac.org