



Representative Bride Rose Sweeney & Leader Allison Russo

Sponsor Testimony: House Bill 306 (The Ohio Anti-Corruption Act)

House Government Oversight Committee

December 1, 2022

Chairman Wilkin, Vice-Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Brown, and members of the House Government Oversight Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today in favor of House Bill 306, the Ohio Anti-Corruption Act. This bill seeks to safeguard our politics from bad actors who seek to subvert democracy itself to serve their own interests.

The influence of dark, unaccountable money on Ohio politics has contributed to numerous scandals in recent years, especially surrounding the passage of House Bill 6 in 2019. Non-profit corporations like 501(c)(4)s and limited liability companies (LLCs) have become vehicles for big money special interests to hide their election spending. Under current Ohio law, these groups can spend virtually unlimited sums of money on political campaigns without having to disclose any of their activities.

Ranked worst in the nation for public corruption by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Ohio has been marred by scandal after scandal, linking political leaders to dark money organizations and pay-for-play practices culminating in not one, not two, but three separate FBI investigations into Republican House Speakers. It is clear that our current campaign finance laws incentivize corruption at the highest levels of government. We should not have to rely on the FBI alone to bring bad actors to light.

The Ohio Anti-Corruption Act would secure the integrity of our system by requiring political contributing entities (or PCEs) to disclose details about their leadership and activities on a regular basis. It creates new requirements for disclosure that close many of the loopholes that allow dark money to pass into our system unnoticed. It would also create clear rules for how a PCE may organize and distribute its funds.

The Ohio Anti-Corruption Act would bring order to a campaign finance system that incentivizes bad behavior. Why should we allow dark money organizations to drop \$60 million on elections with no strings attached, but require everyday Ohioans who give \$100 bucks to our campaigns to list their name, address, and occupation? While this bill does not and cannot prohibit these types of contributions due to *Citizens United*, it would prevent dark money organizations from going unnoticed or abusing Ohio business classifications.

The integrity of our democracy and the future of our state depend on openness and accountability in government. It is long overdue that we require 501(c)(4)s and LLCs to disclose contributions meant to influence elections. Ohioans have a right to know who funds the candidates on their ballots each November, regardless of if a donor is an individual or an organization. Thank you for the opportunity to testify. We'd be happy to answer any questions.