

## HB 458 Sponsor Testimony

Chair Gavarone, Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking member Maharath, and members of the Senate Local Government and Elections Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on HB 458. This is a bipartisan approach aimed to eliminate the August Special elections in an effort to save taxpayer money.

Currently, Ohio law allows special August elections to fill vacant seats at various levels of government, and local political subdivisions may also place tax levies on the ballot. With such low voter turnout, however, special elections are not an accurate representation of public opinion. H.B. 458 will prevent these elections to increase transparency and election integrity, while also decreasing the financial burden on taxpayers.

Under the bill, there will be 3 special exceptions:

1. Allows the Governor to call a special election to fill vacant U.S. Congressional seats, or other offices deemed absolutely necessary;
2. Allows a political subdivision to hold a special election, for the purpose of proposing to the electors the question to adopt a charter;
3. Allows a political subdivision or school district to hold a special election if the political subdivision or school district is under a fiscal emergency at the time.
  - In the case that a special election is called under any of these exceptions, local communities and political subdivisions may piggyback their levies onto these special elections as long as they agree to pay their apportioned share of the election costs

To further illustrate this issue, the Huron County Board of Elections tells me that it would cost them \$67,000 to conduct a county-wide special election, with the Director and Deputy Director allotting over 1,000 hours to the task. This is time that could be used to clean up the voter rolls, enter voter registrations into the database or conduct voter outreach and education. Fairfield County held a special election in August of 2020 for a village income tax. 278 of 1300 voters cast ballots at cost of \$33.21 per vote.

The idea for this bill came from one of my county commissioners. After talking with him, I then met with our local board of elections. Their bipartisan team was also very supportive of this idea due to the amount of time and money involved for these August special elections.

I want to also point out, Secretary of State Frank LaRose is supportive of this initiative, as well as the Ohio Association of Election Officials. I would like to thank the association for their help in crafting this piece of legislation that is being considered here today.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on HB 458 and I would be happy to take any questions at this time.