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Ohio Senate Local Government and Elections
House Bill 458 – Proponent Testimony

Matt Old - Erie County Commissioner

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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 testify today in support of House Bill 458.

My name is Matt Old and I am in my sixth year of service as an Erie County Commissioner. I am here today to speak on behalf of the County Commissioners Association of Ohio (CCAO). As part of CCAO, I serve on the association's board of directors as well as the chair of the CCAO Joint Committee on Administration of Elections, which reviews elections-related legislation on a bipartisan basis in partnership with the Ohio Association of Election Officials.

Counties have a significant budgetary obligation to county boards of elections. The increasing complexity and requirements of election administration has caused election costs to increase dramatically, creating significant budgetary pressures on counties. CCAO has a longstanding policy of supporting efforts to contain, and where appropriate, reduce the overall cost and complexity of election administration.

The CCAO policy platform calls for curtailing August special elections. August special elections consume staff time and resources from county boards of elections. County boards of elections must train and recruit poll workers, print ballot materials, conduct early voting, prepare voting locations and fulfill all other requirements, all for August special elections which traditionally feature low voter engagement. These resources could be better utilized elsewhere.

August special elections also create unbudgeted expenses that boards of commissioners must address. While statute requires the prepayment of 65 percent of these election costs by participating political subdivisions, commissioners must fund the remainder and are not reimbursed until after the election.



HB 458 proposes to limit elections primarily to general and primary elections, with certain exceptions. Eliminating August special elections would result in savings for local governments, as the cost of placing a single issue before voters in a special election is charged back to the taxing district that proposed the tax levy. These chargebacks, however, do not encompass the wear and tear on voting machines, which counties are responsible to provide and maintain.

CCAO believes primary and general elections provide adequate opportunities for local governments to plan and conduct tax-levy campaigns. Voters are often unaccustomed to going to the polls in August, which leads to lower voter turnout. Having these issues considered during a primary or general election will likely engage a greater portion of the electorate.

CCAO previously supported the elimination of the February special election, as effectuated in House Bill 64 of the 131st General Assembly. CCAO asks that the General Assembly continue this progress of simplifying Ohio's election administration process by passing HB 458.

I thank you for your time and consideration and would be happy to answer any questions you may have for me.