



Testimony in support of Sub. HB 458

Ohio Senate
Local Government and Elections Committee

December 7th, 2022

Beau Euton on behalf of
Madeline Malisa, Visiting Fellow
Opportunity Solutions Project

Chair Gavarone, Vice-Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Maharath, and honorable members of the committee, my name is Beau Euton and I'm testifying on behalf of Madeline Malisa of the Opportunity Solutions Project, a non-profit, non-partisan advocacy organization that works on election integrity issues in states across the country. I appreciate the opportunity to speak today in support of this legislation.

Ohio voters are passionate about the fundamental right that we all have as Americans to vote and participate in our democratic process. They don't want loopholes and weaknesses in the design of elections that threaten that right. Sub HB 458 is an excellent bill that will increase security, accountability, and transparency in Ohio elections.

The bill will strengthen voter ID laws by requiring a government-issued photo ID to vote in person. Requiring a voter to show a photo ID will simultaneously confirm their identity and preclude a bad actor from stealing their vote. Proving that you are who you say you are with photo ID is common sense.

It also makes perfect sense to voters—in fact, polling demonstrates that photo ID laws are popular with voters of all political persuasions in Ohio and across the country.¹ A significant majority of voters support these requirements for in-person voting, and more than 91 percent of all likely voters nationwide say that election integrity and security are important to them.² This reform has been widely enacted by lawmakers across the country including in Florida, Missouri, South Carolina, Indiana, and Wisconsin.

The bill would also require voters to provide two forms of identification on their application for an absent voter's ballot and on the ballot envelope itself. This will ensure a fair and uniform level of security regardless of how an Ohio voter casts their ballot.

The legislation will help to safeguard Ohio elections from ballot harvesting. Government officials will be prohibited from sending out mass mailings of unsolicited applications for absent voter's ballots. If a voter receives an official application without asking for it, they face confusion about whether they are required to vote absentee. This reform will provide clarity to voters who want to vote on Election Day. It will also help to prevent unlawful ballot harvesting practices, which often target the elderly and other vulnerable voters.

Sub HB 458 will implement critical safeguards for drop boxes, including that they be monitored 24/7 by recorded video surveillance. These video records will be public and available on request. Each board of elections can deploy only one secure drop box at their office for use during operating hours. A bipartisan team of election officials will be required to empty the ballots from drop boxes daily, ensuring accountability in the process. This reform will greatly increase ballot security and transparency for absentee ballots. Ohio is not alone in seeking ways to ensure integrity in these election processes. States across the country including Kentucky, Missouri, South Carolina, and Utah have all recently enacted similar legislation to address drop box security.

Currently, Ohio law allows late-arriving ballots up to 10 days after Election Day if a ballot is postmarked before. This practice opens the door to potential fraud and decreases voter confidence in election results. The bill will require that all ballots be received by the time the polls close on Election Day. Voters who are unable to mail their ballot will still have the option of returning it to the office of the board on Election Day. Requiring that ballots be received on Election Day is already law in many states including Florida, Idaho, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Wisconsin.

Sub HB 458 will allow in-person absentee ballots to be pre-processed by voting machines before Election Day. This will help to ensure that ballot counts are fast and accurate. The boards of elections will not be allowed to tabulate or count the votes before the polls close.

Ohio voters recently approved Issue 2, which amended Ohio's Constitution to prohibit non-citizens from voting in local elections.³ Sub HB 458 will implement crucial administrative safeguards that prevent non-citizens from voting. This bill will require that all driver's licenses and state ID cards issued to non-citizens contain a notation. This will assist election officials in verifying voter citizenship.

Public access to and public confidence in the integrity of our elections are fundamental components of enduring freedom. Ohio citizens want to know that when they vote, they're doing so in free, fair, and valid elections. These commonsense reforms will increase election security and voter confidence. I urge you to consider supporting this important legislation. Thank you.

¹ Opportunity Solutions Project, "Ohio Election Integrity Support Poll," (conducted June 2021), <https://solutionsproject.org/polls/ohio-election-integrity-support/>.

² Center for Excellent in Polling, "2022 National Election Security Poll," Foundation for Government Accountability (2022), <https://excellenceinpolling.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/CEP-Polling-National-Election-Security-Poll-Crosstabs.pdf>.

³ Ohio Issue 2, Citizenship Voting Requirement Amendment (2022).