



**Opponent Testimony of Mia Lewis
Regarding Sub. H. B. 458
Presented to the Senate Local Government and Elections Committee
December 7, 2022**

Chair Gavarone, Vice-Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Maharath and Members of the Ohio Senate Local Government and Elections Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before this committee today on Sub. H. B. 458. My name is Mia Lewis, and I am Associate Director of Common Cause Ohio, and work every day to make Ohio elections are free and fair – which means making sure that all eligible voters are able to cast a ballot without unnecessary barriers and roadblocks.

The amended version of HB 458 looks like one big road block to me. Hastily and haphazardly constructed, rushed through with virtually no notice or opportunity for discussion and analysis, **Sub HB 458 would do nothing to improve elections in Ohio or solve existing problems.** But it would without a doubt prevent tens or even hundreds of thousands of voters from casting a ballot. Why the need to prevent Ohioans from being able to vote? Why the need to rush through immense changes in election law in a hasty, last minute, and underhanded maneuver? Why?

Truly, I would like to know why. What is so desperately wrong with Ohio elections that requires these drastic and draconian measures to be enacted, RIGHT NOW, without time for thoughtful discussion and analysis?

For no named or even implied advantages, this bill would require strict voter ID. We know voter impersonation is exceedingly rare: there has not been one single instance of this brought up for prosecution in the last ten years. And yet, this provision will negatively impact tens of thousands of Ohioans who currently lack a state-issued ID. It's not just the ID—sometimes a citizen can face difficulty obtaining the underlying documents needed to successfully apply for a driver's license. If this provision in the bill had been brought forward in a timely fashion, I would have been able to present research showing just how many Ohioans this would affect. No amount of funding for IDs can magically fix this problem.

Speaking of funding, I will point out that this bill has no fiscal note attached. Ohio taxpayers are being asked to pick up the cost—whatever it may turn out to be. What a crazy and irresponsible idea. What crisis in Ohio elections is so urgent that we need to pass a bill without even figuring out the cost?

There are at least a dozen other ways that this bill would make it more difficult for Ohioans to cast a ballot—but there has not been sufficient time to even LIST them, let alone do a thorough and considered analysis. Again, what exactly is so desperately wrong with Ohio elections that these drastic changes are needed?

If passed, Sub HB 458 would represent the single most significant change in Ohio voting laws in decades. And yet—these changes are being introduced as an amendment that adds 100 pages to a bill that was originally only 15 pages long. I'll say that again: an uncontroversial bill that was 15 pages long suddenly has over 100 pages added that are packed with controversial provisions that would make it harder for Ohioans to vote, and no one is given a chance to thoroughly digest the contents before it is rushed to committee.

Don't significant, even monumental, changes to our election law deserve time for research, analysis, and discussion? Shouldn't the Association of Ohio Elections Officials be given time to carefully consider this bill and all its implications for their work? Shouldn't active duty military, voting advocates, advocates for the disabled and more been given a chance to weigh in?

What exactly is the rush?

Do you think Ohioans care about voting? I think they do. Do they care about democracy? I know they do. Do they care if they are able to vote or if their vote is counted or not? Yes, they do care. Respect for Ohio voters, Ohio elections and Election Officials requires you NOT to pass this bill in such a rushed and underhanded manner, but to allow full and comprehensive debate and analysis of how best to improve Ohio elections at a later date.