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The OEA will lead the way for continuous improvement of public education while advocating for members and the learners they serve.

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House Bill 458: Opposition Testimony (written only)
Senate Local Government and Elections Committee
Monday, December 12, 2022

Chair Gavarone and Members of the Committee:

My name is Scott DiMauro. I am a proud high school government teacher and currently serve as the President of the Ohio Education Association. On behalf of the 120,000 members of OEA, I offer testimony in opposition to House Bill 458. With the recent changes adopted by this committee, this bill would make it more difficult for Ohioans to exercise their right to vote.

The right to vote is fundamental to our democracy. As educators, we try to instill in our students the importance of civic participation regardless of what they believe. As an organization, OEA members have adopted legislative policies that support the right of all Ohio citizens to have access to the polls. The legislature should be pursuing ways to make it easier and more convenient for Ohioans to vote. Unfortunately, House Bill 458 serves to erect more barriers and make it harder to vote.

OEA opposes the provision in House Bill 458 that would require a photo ID and eliminate alternative means of identification for voters such as a utility bill or bank statement. A strict photo ID requirement places an unnecessary burden on Ohioans who do not have a driver's license. This can include college students, the poor, elderly, or disabled. Even with the state providing free state ID cards this is an unnecessary hurdle for voters and an unnecessary cost to the state.

Further, OEA opposes the provision in the bill that would require absentee ballots to be received by election day to be counted. This will punish voters when mail delivery is slow, including the disabled, elderly, or overseas military voters. As written, HB 458 makes it more likely that eligible voters will have their votes thrown out or not counted. Limiting access to drop boxes exacerbates this problem.

OEA also opposes the provision in the bill that would eliminate August special elections in most cases. This would further limit the opportunities for school districts to seek school levies and secure funding based on community needs.

As a state, we should be looking for more civic participation, higher voter turnout, and ways to make it easier for citizens to participate in our democracy. House Bill 458 does the opposite. I urge a no vote on HB 458.