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Local Government - *Vice Chair*  
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Finance  
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Rules and Reference  
Judiciary

**Theresa Gavarone**  
Majority Whip  
2nd District

Chairman Peterson, Vice Chairman Thomas, Ranking Member Forhan and Members of the House Government Oversight Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 71, the DATA Act.

Ohio serves as the national model for election administration. Other states constantly look to Ohio for solutions to the difficult challenges our democracy faces. While Ohio consistently leads, we know that we can always continue to develop innovative solutions to bolster election integrity and transparency. The DATA Act that I introduced in partnership with Secretary of State Frank LaRose, will once again show the world that Ohio is committed to fair, secure, and accurate elections. At a high-level, the DATA Act seeks to (1) set forth consistent and standard election data definitions; and (2) requires that election data be retained, disclosed, analyzed, and archived.

Ohio is one of just a few states nationwide that is a “bottom-up” state for election administration. That means that the 88 county Boards of Elections (BOEs) administer elections and are the original and only source of election data. The DATA Act will not change the decentralized nature of Ohio’s elections and data. However, it will set forth specific data definitions to help better compare and analyze election data among the 88 county BOEs who may define terms differently. We must standardize election data definitions so that it is easy for the world to see that the number of voters that voted equates to the number of ballots that were counted in an election. This should be a concept that we can all agree upon. Moreover, the DATA Act creates definitions that will clean up the data so that there are no perceived discrepancies to the public and that data following an election reconciles. We need to be able to simply compare “apples to apples” to increase voter confidence that we know has been degraded over the last several years.

The DATA Act accomplishes this by establishing the Office of Data Analytics and Archives in the Secretary of State’s office, which will be responsible for retaining voter registration and other election data and publishing this data to the public.

In addition to codifying election data definitions, the DATA Act will require county BOEs to submit a daily record of its voter registration database to the Secretary of State between the start of Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (“UOCAVA”) voting and the 81<sup>st</sup> day following an election. The DATA Act requires that the Secretary of State’s office publish this data



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on its website where the public can download and review the data. The bill will also require that non-federal election ballots be retained through the 81<sup>st</sup> day of the election. Current law only

requires non-federal election ballots to be retained for 60 days instead of 81 days, which is the amount of time current law permits the BOEs to amend their official canvass of election results. It is common sense to require BOEs to retain copies of their voter registration database and the ballots their results are based on for the same number of days the BOEs could amend its official canvass of election results. Creating parity in the retention of this critical information will ensure that results will reconcile and strengthen voter confidence in those elections.

Ohio's elections are secure and strong because of the great work our 88 county boards of elections do to administer elections. The DATA Act seeks to make their lives easier by providing standard definitions and enhancing the way that data is transferred to the Secretary of State's office to be transparently disclosed to the public. The election data will be available to download on a user-friendly dashboard created by the Secretary of State's office. Currently, the Secretary of State's Office must manually survey the boards for this information, which is a time-consuming and labor-intensive process for county BOEs. The automation of the daily reporting of this election data will save the county BOEs and the state time and thus, save the taxpayers money. In addition to this cost-saving benefit, this data will be publicly available, which will drastically reduce the need to submit and respond to public record requests.

No other state in the nation has such an election data standardization, retention, and archive system in place. The enactment of the DATA Act will once again highlight Ohio as nationwide leader in the administration of elections where it is easy to vote and hard to cheat.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on the DATA Act. I would be more than happy to answer any questions the committee may have.