



PARTICIPATORY
BUDGETING PROJECT

October 10, 2023

The Ohio House of Representatives
Government Oversight Committee
Chair Bob Peterson,

Greetings,

Thank you for your time, my name is Elizabeth Crews, I work with the Participatory Budgeting Project and I am writing to oppose the passage of Senate Bill 158 which would take power away from the people of Ohio, narrowing our democracy in a time when we need to expand it.

The Participatory Budgeting Project (PBP) is the leading organization advocating for and growing participatory budgeting in the United States. Participatory budgeting (PB) is a democratic process where community members directly decide how public funds are spent. While every PB process is uniquely designed to meet the needs of the community, there are 5 main phases of every PB process: Design, Idea Collection, Proposal Development, Vote, and Implementation/Evaluation. Each of these phases draw upon the expertise of the community by valuing the lived experiences of residents who are directly impacted by the decisions made by budgeting processes.

PB started in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 1989, and emerged in the U.S. the first participatory budgeting process in the U.S. was in 2009 in Chicago, IL and 2011 in Brooklyn, NY. Since then PB has been practiced by over 100 U.S. cities, and has been shown to increase people's interest and investment in civic life.

Our government at all levels needs more civic participation, more opportunities to open the doors of decision making and share power, more democracy - not less. At the core of participatory budgeting is an assertion that the people most impacted by decisions, including budgeting, policy, and other building blocks of society, should have a say in those decisions beyond election day. When formal decision-makers work with their constituents, rather than blocking them out, we make better decisions and cultivate a

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safer, stronger, and more engaged community. Research shows that engagement in participatory budgeting improves relationships between elected officials and those they are empowered to represent and serve. By focusing on collaboration and demystifying budgeting processes, elected officials have an

opportunity to foster trust, learn more about the needs and priorities of their community, and make sure the allocation of public funds match the needs and voice of the community.

By working transparently and collaboratively to build new co-governance structures that put community leaders and their needs at the center, we can reinvigorate democracy and grow civic participation.

Our democracy currently stands at a critical crossroads, and Senate Bill 158 threatens to curtail residents' ability to influence decisions that directly affect their lives. This bill poses a risk to the principles of civic participation and citizen engagement that are crucial for a thriving and inclusive society.

Thank you for your time.

Elizabeth Crews
Director of Strategic Initiatives
Participatory Budgeting Project

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