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Contact Information:

Office: 614-466-8550
Email: rep45@ohiohouse.gov
77 S. High Street, 13th Floor
Columbus, Ohio 43215-6111

**Representative Jennifer Gross
The Ohio House of Representatives**

Representative Jennifer Gross - HB 210 Sponsor Testimony: December 5, 2023

Chairman Peterson, Vice Chair Thomas, Ranking Member Humphrey, and members of the Government Oversight Committee, thank you for allowing Representative Click and myself to provide sponsor testimony for House Bill 210.

The purpose of HB210 is to make Ohio's primary elections more reliable and secure. The bill would require an elector to register as a member of a specific political party by a pre-determined deadline to participate in that party's primary election. This system prevents "cross-over" voting by members of other parties attempting to manipulate our open system.

Currently, Ohio is a "partially open" state for primary elections. We do not require voters to declare a party preference when they register to vote in a primary election. Instead, voters may choose a party on the day of the primary vote. That choice determines their party affiliation for the next two years.

HB 210 would adjust ORC section 3513.19 to require the voter to register as affiliated with a political party by the December 31st preceding a primary election, to vote in that party's upcoming primary. For example, if HB 210 was current law, for the next upcoming primary election March 19th, 2024, the voter would have to be registered with the desired party by December 31st, 2023, to vote either as a Republican or Democrat.

This bill allows voters who are registered members of a political party to vote only for his or her respective party candidates in a primary election, including presidential primaries. A person can still register with a party or change his or her affiliation at any time. That ability is not being taken away. However, to vote for a specific party candidate, the person must register with that party or change his or her party affiliation by the registration deadline.

In 15 states, at least one party utilizes closed primaries to nominate partisan candidates for state-level and congressional offices. 9 states are closed for both Republicans and Democrats. Only 16 states have open primaries with no runoff elections.

The members of each political party should be selecting their own candidate for office. By allowing this change, Ohio's primary elections can run as they were intended. Establishing an advanced, 90-day deadline to register for a political party grants Ohioans more faith in the election process without fear of meddling by cross-over the day of the election. This bill would increase voter confidence and further ensure election integrity.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on HB 210, and now testimony from my Joint Sponsor Representative Click.