

Testimony in Favor of House Bill 471 Before the Government Oversight Committee of the Ohio House of Representatives, May 21, 2024

Chairman Peterson, Vice Chair Thomas, Ranking Member Humphrey, and members of the House Government Oversight Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on behalf of House Bill 471.

My name is Tony Schroeder. I am a Member of the Putnam County Board of Elections. I was first appointed to the Board of Elections in March of 2016.

The foundation of any system of representative government is the trust of the electorate that elections are fairly conducted, secure, and accurately counted. Trust is earned through transparency - as Justice Brandeis said, "Sunlight is said to be the best of disinfectants" - and more information, not less, builds trust. To that end, I encourage the passage of House Bill 471.

Candidates for office in Ohio must meet several requirements to be qualified for office, including the requirement to list former names on candidate petitions. This long-standing disclosure rule, created in statute by the General Assembly, protects our electorate by allowing protests against potential candidates who are ineligible to hold office.

House Bill 471 would allow for protests against a candidate by any elector, not just an elector of the same political party, as is the case in current law. In a sense, it mirrors how our Boards of Elections work now - two members from each of the major political parties who can

challenge, if necessary, the actions of the members of the opposing party. Similarly, House Bill 471 would extend limited means of check and balance to the ballot access process, eliminating partisan advantage. Any protests filed as result of this provision would still be heard by the responsible Board of Elections under existing law, providing for full due process.

House Bill 471 enhances transparency, builds trust, and makes our elections more secure. I respectfully ask that you approve this bill and send it to the floor.