

February 20, 2024

Chair Rulli, Vice Chair Schuring, Ranking Member DeMora, and members of the General Government Committee,

My name is Jessica Epstein, and I serve as an At-Large City Council Member for the City of Tallmadge. I am writing to offer my testimony regarding SB137, which I oppose vehemently. Please note that my testimony is submitted solely on my own behalf.

I stand in opposition to SB137 because I firmly believe as guardians of democracy, it is our duty to address the ongoing threat of erosion of trust in key institutions and work towards restoring trust among our constituents. One crucial way to achieve this is by allowing voters to express their preferences freely when casting their votes.

Ranked choice voting presents a solution that can significantly contribute to restoring trust in our electoral system. It offers a simple yet effective method that requires candidates to earn a majority of the vote without the need for costly runoff elections. By doing so, it eliminates the presence of "vote-splitting candidates" and empowers individuals to vote for the candidate they genuinely prefer without fear of strategic voting.

Furthermore, ranked choice voting aligns with the principles of home rule, which grants cities the autonomy to make decisions that best suit the needs and preferences of their constituents. If a city determines that ranked choice voting is the right approach for its residents, then it should have the freedom to implement it without interference from state-level mandates.

SB137 represents nothing short of government overreach, infringing upon the rights of local communities to govern themselves in a manner that aligns with their values and interests. History has shown us time and again that overreach of any kind is contrary to the will of the voters.

In summary, ranked choice voting offers a more efficient and inclusive alternative to traditional runoff elections, and cities should have the freedom to choose this method if they so desire. I urge you to reject SB137 and uphold the principles of democracy, trust, and local autonomy.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

Sincerely,

Jessica Epstein