



**SENATE GENERAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE
OPPONENT TESTIMONY ON SENATE BILL 137 | FEBRUARY 21, 2024**

Chair Rulli, Vice Chair Schuring, Ranking Member DeMora, and members of the Senate General Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide opponent testimony on Senate Bill 137. My name is Keary McCarthy, and I am the Executive Director of the Ohio Mayors Alliance, a bipartisan coalition of mayors in Ohio's 30 largest cities and suburbs.

While we do not have a position as a bipartisan organization on ranked-choice voting, we are united in our opposition to using the Local Government Fund as a tool to undermine local home rule authority.

The Local Government Fund (LGF) is the largest revenue sharing program between our state and local governments in Ohio. While the LGF has been significantly reduced over the last two decades, it still remains a critical resource to support our largest municipal budgetary expense, which is public safety. We believe it is inappropriate to withhold LGF and jeopardize public safety efforts to resolve unrelated policy disputes between state and local leaders.

Furthermore, Ohio is a diverse state with a wide-variety of communities and interests. Local policies enacted by locally elected leaders are often done so in response to concerns of those citizens. Local policies can also be innovative solutions to unique challenges of a particular community. Imposing a one-size-fits-all standard limits the ability of local leaders to respond to their residents and undermines policy innovation at the local level.

Lastly, while we oppose the use of LGF as a penalty for implementing ranked-choice voting or any other policy, we do appreciate that this bill does not directly attempt an overly broad, unconstitutional state preemption. If the will of the Ohio General Assembly is to prohibit this policy in local elections, it should follow the precedent it set just two years ago for making such changes.

As you may recall, the legislature passed HJR 4 in the 134th General Assembly and placed an amendment to the state constitution on the ballot that clarified that local governments in Ohio cannot authorize non-citizen, legal residents the right to vote in local elections. While it was the understanding of most legal experts that this was already prohibited under state and federal law, HJR 4 appeared as Issue 2 in the 2022 General Election and was approved overwhelmingly by Ohio voters.

Again, the Ohio Mayors Alliance does not have a position on ranked-choice voting for municipal elections, and we are not aware of any of our cities that are considering allowing ranked choice voting in a local municipal election. However, we strongly oppose SB 137 because it proposes to withhold LGF as a means to undermine local control. This could ultimately impact funding for public safety and contradict the Jeffersonian principle that the government closest to the people governs best. We urge the committee to vote no on SB 137.