

February 16, 2024

Meghan Stevens
8050 N Clippinger Drive
Cincinnati, OH 45243

Dear Chairman Rulli, Ranking Member DeMora, and members of the General Government Committee,

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to submit testimony on SB 137. My name is Meghan Stevens and I am a resident of Cincinnati. I am writing to express my strong opposition to Senate Bill 137, currently under consideration by this esteemed committee. I believe that SB 137 poses significant concerns that warrant careful reconsideration.

As our elected legislators, you are responsible for passing laws that improve the lives of your constituents, and SB 137 would do the opposite. SB 137 seeks to weaken the voters' ability to vote for candidates who represent their views. In fact, SB 137 attempts to go even further. By withholding state funding for communities who use ranked choice voting, citizens would in fact be punished for exercising their constitutional right to home rule. Instead of undermining home rule, the autonomy of localities in making decisions that best serve their residents should be respected and preserved.

Does RCV cause "ballot exhaustion" and thereby disenfranchise citizens as opponents claim? Last year's Alaska's at-large congressional seat won by Mary Peltola is often cited as such a case because 11,000 voters decided, as was their option, to vote for *only one* Republican candidate and no one else. When their candidate did not garner a majority in the first round, RCV rules dictated that the second-choice candidate on those ballots receive the votes. But as there were no second-choice candidates, yes, those ballots were set aside. Had those voters selected a second-choice candidate, their votes would have been redistributed between the two remaining candidates. Everyone voted their conscience, the results were tabulated, and the majority winner took office. Being unhappy with the results is not a reason to cry unfair now.

In a Maine 2018 congressional race, then-incumbent GOP Rep. Bruce Poliquin lost to Democrat Jared Golden despite Poliquin's winning the most votes in the first round of voting. Note, however, that in the first round, Poliquin *did not win a majority* of the votes cast. After the first round, he had 46.3% of the vote, meaning the majority (53.7%) of the votes cast were for other candidates. Golden was the second choice for 10,000 voters, while only 4700 voters chose Poliquin for their second choice. Golden took office with a majority of Maine's citizens choosing him, 50.53% to 49.47% because Poliquin did not sufficiently appeal to them to be their first *or* second place choice, and he therefore justifiably lost.

What about the time it takes to vote in an RCV election? Because candidate elimination cannot begin until every ballot has been returned, tabulation must wait until every provisional, mail, military, and absentee ballot is processed. While opponents to RCV see this as a negative, it is simply democracy in action. Yes, every vote must be counted, because with ranked-choice voting, *every vote counts*. Surely, when considering to whom we should grant the power wielded by our elected officials, we can invest the time to count all the votes.

But an RCV election is just as likely to save time. In the ten states that require run-off campaigns, the millions of dollars spent and the weeks of additional campaigning would be eliminated, and a winner would be announced much more quickly.

Last year, the Republican controlled Ohio legislature attempted to thwart the will of the people by changing the rules regarding the adoption of state constitutional Amendments. The people responded by re-affirming those rules in a special August election, and then by expressing their collective will on Issues 1 and 2 on the November ballot.

SB 137 is another attempt to limit the power of the citizens of Ohio. It serves only to shield those at risk of losing authority and power. The people of Ohio kindly remind the members of this committee that you work for us. We do not empower you to take away our right to home rule, and you must therefore vote against SB 137.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Meghan Stevens". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Meghan Stevens