February 20, 2024

The good folks at the General Government Committee

Thank you for this opportunity to provide written testimony on Senate Bill 137. My testimony will be to the point.

Ranked Choice Voting is not used in Ohio. I find legislation to ban it preemptively to then be political theater that serves only to clutter an already overlong Ohio Revised Code. It's a very unproductive use of legislative time. That the law as proposed punishes localities by withholding funds makes it worse, state overreach that limits the ability of municipalities to pursue systems of voting that may benefit their governance. Generally, I think policy experimentation is good and to see something tried at the local level would benefit everyone in making more informed decisions on whether it is good for the state as a whole.

I am also concerned about the impact on perceptions of our democracy and government should many elections in the near future in Ohio be won by candidates with a plurality rather than a majority of votes. We are in unstable political times where the strength of established political parties are historically weak. If an upstart party were to contest many races creating three-way or more elections, that could certainly result in many elections won with far less than 50% of the vote. This could cause dissatisfaction among the electorate and challenges from all parties. A likely solution proposed would be RCV. Enacting a law to ban a practice that does not currently happen in Ohio is silly. It will be worse if a year from now those who are proponents of this bill could be calling for its repeal when a new political reality has presented itself.

My main concerns with this bill then are that it appears unnecessary and threatens to degrade faith in our democracy and our politics. I would urge members of the committee to drop the bill and focus on other matters and to not be attached to a bill they may want to repeal a year from now.

Thank you,
Timothy Grady