



TO: Senator Matt Dolan, Senator Dave Burke, Senator Sean O'Brien, Representative Scott Oelslager, Representative Jim Butler, Representative Jack Cera, and Members of the Ohio General Assembly.

CC: Governor DeWine, Secretary of State LaRose, Ohio Statehouse Press Corps

RE: Opposition to Poll Worker Reduction Amendment, Section 3502.22 (A) (2) (c)

Our collective organizations care deeply about election administration. Many of our members/supporters serve as poll workers on Election Day, and quite a few are polling location managers around the Buckeye State.

Poll workers are the backbone of democracy, serving as first responders when problems arise, and because they play that role, any reduction in the number of poll workers should be done with great caution and ample planning.

Our organizations partnered with the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law to coordinate nonpartisan Election Protection hotline in the 2018 general election. In Ohio, Election Protection volunteers operated call centers in Akron, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Columbus, Dayton, and Toledo, and dispatched poll monitors across Ohio to observe polling locations and support voters. **In total, Election Protection received complaints across 39 counties in Ohio on Election Day 2018, and specifically received complaints around machine failures in 14 counties in both densely-populated and rural areas.**

Unexpected technology challenges included failures of optical scanners, loss of power forcing the transition to paper ballots, non-operational ADA-accessible machines, and machine malfunctions when voters attempted to cast their ballot. Several counties had challenges with electronic poll books including not having them operational when polls opened and coding errors that wrongly marked countless voters as having requested an absentee ballot.

Technology problems caused delays and long lines in several polling locations, requiring poll workers to devote significant time to address these unexpected

issues. Most concerning, some voters were wrongly turned away at the polls or forced to vote provisionally.

The upcoming 2020 Presidential Election may have similar or even worse issues. Generally, presidential elections have higher voter turnout, and many counties are debuting new voting machines in 2019 and 2020. Reductions in poll workers in an election where large numbers of voters turn out and experience new technology for the first time is a perfect storm for voter disenfranchisement. Poll workers are needed more than ever in these conditions.

In recent weeks, our coalition members have worked closely with lawmakers of both parties and diverse stakeholders to draft amendments that would provide further protections for voters while also allowing Boards of Elections to assess their poll worker needs. While we all hope for the best judgment exercised by our officials, in order to protect the integrity and fairness of our elections, our laws need to include adequate protections.

This amendment was slipped in without any hearings and without those additional considerations. It should be removed because it could have dire consequences on our democracy, by creating excessively long-lines like we saw in 2004.

We respectfully ask that this amendment to be removed from the budget bill, so that we can continue a bi-partisan process of improving elections with the proper State and Senate Committees.

Thank you.

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