



Legislation Text

File #: 0105X-2020, **Version:** 1

To Condemn House Bill 680 of the 133 Ohio General Assembly and Call for Safe and Accessible Voting Options in the 2020 General Election

WHEREAS, the right to vote in free and fair elections is the bedrock liberty that enables all other rights in our constitutional democracy;

WHEREAS, the global pandemic resulted in Ohio implementing a hasty and chaotic plan for the primary election that caused widespread confusion and disenfranchisement, allowing just 22.6% of eligible Ohioans to take part;

WHEREAS, in Franklin County, 3,564 absentee ballots and 1,337 provisional ballots were rejected, often for trivial and unacceptable reasons such as not-visible postmarks, mail delays, envelope issues, voting in-person at the county board of elections as directed, or not being registered likely as a result of being purged;

WHEREAS, in Franklin County, only 22.5% of eligible voters were able to cast a ballot, down from 41.1% in the equivalent election in 2016;

WHEREAS, the path to a safe and accessible November election is to maximize the secure options that Ohioans have to participate in our democracy by making voting by mail less burdensome, increasing options for in-person early voting especially in the most populous counties such as Franklin, and ensuring that Election Day polling places are available and sanitary;

WHEREAS, House Bill 680 included provisions contrary to these goals by making it harder to vote by mail by prohibiting prepaid postage for which federal funds are already available and making in-person voting more dangerous by prohibiting public health standards at Election Day polling places, and initially contained objectionable provisions such as reducing in-person early voting days and withholding absentee request forms, which is why it was opposed 80-1 in proponent-opponent testimony;

WHEREAS, Ohio has already experienced a drop in voter participation over the last decade, from the 7th highest in the country in 2008 to 29th in 2018, due to the adoption of anti-voter laws and suppression practices that have purged over one million Ohioans from the voter rolls;

WHEREAS, the majority leadership of the Ohio House of Representatives has demonstrated no intention to ensure a successful election this November, rejecting the many areas of overlap across good-faith reform proposals advanced by the Secretary of State, Democratic leaders, nonpartisan groups like the Ohio Elections Officials Association and League of Women Voters, and others;

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COLUMBUS: that this Council condemns House Bill 680 and any similar legislation that limits voting opportunities at a time when we must be expanding them; implores the Ohio Senate to reject this legislation; and urges Governor DeWine to veto such legislation should it reach his desk;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: that this Council encourages state leaders to instead adopt pro-voter policies like

enabling online absentee requests; prepaying postage on elections mail; reforming signature-, envelope-, and postmark-related barriers that unreasonably disqualify too many Ohioans; expanding in-person early voting locations; and implementing automatic voter registration;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: that this Council intends to be a role model by studying and exhausting opportunities for local government to support voter enfranchisement;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: that this Council hereby directs the Clerk to transmit electronically a copy of this resolution to state legislative leaders, Governor DeWine, Secretary of State LaRose, and all state legislators that represent Franklin County residents.