

Mr. Chairman, my name is Nick Messenger. I am from Bowling Green and a sophomore at The Ohio State University.

During this past election, I volunteered with OSU Votes, the non-partisan, student-lead voter registration organization sponsored by the OSU student government. We help students get registered to vote and assist them as they make their way to the polls. One of the top issues facing students is the question of acceptable forms of identification at the polls, particularly for those students from out-of-state and for those who move every year. Right now, voters without an Ohio driver's license are able to use copies of utility bills, banks statements, paychecks, and other government documents (including a letter from a public college or university) to prove their identity and residence.

However, HB 159 would severely restrict the list of valid voter identification to only four types of photo ID and eliminate common forms of identification that students often use to vote. From my experience working with student voters, I can say this: this bill will have the effect of stopping students from voting.

I'm particularly concerned about the effect this will have on out-of-state students who we are trying to attract to stay in Ohio. Much is made of the brain drain of young people from Ohio and our need to attract and retain the next generation's best and brightest. In so many ways, we encourage young people to get involved, to make a difference in their community, and to take ownership of their future. Yet, when it comes to voting and being able to fully participate in the community in which we live, college students are met with barriers and are frustrated by the process. HB 159 sends the wrong message to the people we want - and need - to stay in Ohio by making it even harder for them to vote. If this bill moves forward, I hope the committee will include a provision for allowing student IDs to be an acceptable form of identification.

This bill also sends a terrible message about the state's priorities. At a time when Ohio is facing an \$8 billion budget deficit, this bill would require millions of dollars of taxpayers' money to implement a new program to provide "free" IDs and fund campaigns to educate voters and poll workers about this new regulation. That money is much

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better spent elsewhere.

The voting experience for students is already challenging. We need to modernize the democratic process in Ohio, not make it harder for young people to vote. I urge you to oppose HB 159.

Thank you.