



Chairman Wiggam, Vice Chair Stephens, Ranking Member Kelly, and members of the State and Local Government Committee,

Thank you for allowing me to send my Testimony on HB 680 in writing. I am Rev Joan Van Becelaere with Unitarian Universalist Justice Ohio. The realities of living in a time of Pandemic prohibit me from speaking to you all in person. I am one of the many thousands of Ohioans with medical conditions that prohibit me from going out in public until we have an effective vaccine for COVID-19.

I write in strong opposition to HB 680. HB 680 makes it harder for older people and those of us with medical conditions like me to vote.

We need an understandable absentee ballot process and new election procedures that make voting more accessible and safe. But HB 680 makes the process of voting in a time of Pandemic by absentee ballot harder and more confusing. HB680: prohibits the Secretary of State from sending out ballot request forms, continuing the current practice of requires voters to download, print, stamp and mail their forms rather than submitting them online, and also forbids the state from paying return postage on ballot requests or ballots themselves.

Many of the older people I work with were confused and frustrated with the multi-stage system required to obtain an absentee ballot. The Post Card only increased the confusion. Far too many just gave up and did not vote.

We need an online absentee ballot application form for those with computer access. And we need the Secretary of State to mail out Postage Paid absentee ballot applications to all registered voters so those without computer access can also more easily apply for an absentee ballot.

Even though a part of safety requirements in a time of Pandemic is to reduce lines and space out our in-person contacts, HB 680 actually reduces the amount of time for early in-person voting. This will only increase lines and crowds and make it more dangerous for elderly people like me to vote in person.

And the Boards of Election need proper funding to make the in-person voting process safer for all with early vote centers that have proper spacing and shields. And we need many more secure drop boxes in each county for those who will drive by and submit their absentee ballots.

HB 680 discriminates against all of us who need to use an absentee ballot to preserve our lives in a time of Pandemic. And it makes it even more dangerous for those of us who want to vote in person in a time of COVID-19.

Do not put us in danger. Do not block us from voting. Please stop HB 680.