

Written testimony
November 14, 2018
Ohio Senate Judiciary Committee
SB 250 (OPPOSED)
Greg Pace, Columbus

Good morning Chairman Bacon, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

As an active organizer for Columbus Community Bill of Rights, over the past four years I have watched the Ohio state government systematically stifle democratic process in our state, for residents who work to change laws we see as potentially harmful to our communities.

First, beginning in 2015, it was the secretary of state, Jon Husted, who instructed local boards of elections to not allow fully-constitutionally-protected initiatives to be placed in front of voters on their ballots. Then, when the Ohio supreme court gave mixed decisions on this practice, the legislature passed a provision in HB 463 which killed our ability, again protected by our state constitution, to allow voters to see and vote on our language to change laws that we see as harmful.

Now, thanks to Senator Hoagland, a member of the American Legislative Exchange Council, and owner of two security firms in Ohio who do business to train security personnel, we have a bill that is intended to stifle Ohio residents' democratic rights even further by turning peaceful protestors into felons.

You cannot have it all ways: you cannot chip away at our democratic rights to change laws, and now even to stifle peaceful attention-getting rights to educate the public, then expect residents of this state to maintain a passive stance. Eventually, suppression results in stronger actions by the general population, whether you want to call it rogue or vigilante, or calling it performing actions to bring attention to perceived injustices.

If you support the rights of residents in Ohio who are awake enough to realize, and willing enough to go out and educate through public protest and, God forbid, through taking initiative to change our laws, then you cannot stifle our means to do so!

There are laws that people see the need to change, and as constituents of a democratic republic, when our government is not protecting us properly, it is our patriotic duty, and our constitutional right to do so. Repeal the section of HB463 that has stifled residents' rights to have our own laws appear on our own ballots. Put the separation of powers in our own state government back to being closer to where they belong. Then we can have a more fair-and-balanced discussion on re-defining who is a criminal in the state of Ohio because of the means they use to bring change within our system.

Thank you