



February 9, 2022

Re: HB 1116 Further restrictions on absentee voting by mail OPPOSE

Dear Chairman Ford and Members of Indiana Senate Elections:

Indiana is currently in the minority of states requiring voters to cite a specific reason for applying to vote absentee by mail. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, we are one of sixteen states requiring voters to give reasons for not being able to vote in-person (<https://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/vopp-table-1-states-with-no-excuse-absentee-voting.aspx>) .

In House Bill 1116, the Indiana Legislature is attempting to further restrict absentee voting by inserting a new provision in Indiana Code requiring voters to certify under penalty of perjury their inability to vote in-person during **the entire early voting period** or in-person on Election Day.

These provisions in HB1116 are restrictive to voting and should be struck from the bill as proposed for these reasons:

- For many voters life is complicated and they may not know ahead of time whether they will be able to vote in-person or not. Restricting them to certify well in advance of Election Day their inability to vote in-person under penalty of perjury means many citizens will simply not vote.
- Twenty-eight days before an election, counties in Indiana use a single early voting site as required by law and may or may not provide other early voting locations.
- The early voting site is generally the county clerk's office and requires voters from outside the county seat to travel long distances. For a voter without reliable transportation this is even more burdensome.
- Parking at an early voting site may be problematic.

- The hours, dates, locations, availability, and accessibility of early voting locations is set by county election boards and varies widely across the State, meaning all voters do not have the same ability to vote early across Indiana.
- A limited number of early voting sites, or one early voting site, in each county may mean voters experience excessive wait times to vote, possibly beyond their ability to endure the process. This may turn away or discourage voters from voting.
- According to the 2021 Indiana Civic Health Index (<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1NsfgD8GIIJtlyMKGYR5FeYj6gbRxoc/view>) by the Indiana Bar Foundation, the State ranked 46th for overall voter turnout in the 2020 general election, a fall from 41st place in the 2016 general election. This is clearly a move in the wrong direction.
- Legislators in support of this provision cite “this bill will increase voter confidence” yet are unable to give instances when absentee voting resulted in voter fraud.
- Widespread voter fraud in absentee voting is a myth. Numerous academic and investigative journalist resources have studied this issue. The list of resources documenting this assertion is extensive, but a few citations are:
 - o <https://www.kxan.com/news/us-politics/election/only-31-instances-of-impersonation-fraud-found-in-a-billion-ballots-cast-election-experts-report/>
 - o http://www.projectvote.org/wp-content/uploads/2007/03/Politics_of_Voter_Fraud_Final.pdf
 - o <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/debunking-voter-fraud-myth>

Indiana should encourage voters to participate in whatever ways are most convenient to them, whether by absentee ballot or in-person during early voting or on election day. HB1116 sends the wrong message to Indiana voters and does not encourage civic participation by Indiana’s citizens.

Restricting Indiana’s absentee voting further does nothing to help voters and further harms the franchise of voting by placing unreasonable restrictions on this most basic expression of the democratic process. Indiana is moving in the wrong direction with HB1116. For this reason, the undersigned ask you to oppose this language in HB1116.

Linda Hanson, Co-President
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