



May 11, 2020

The Honorable Sherrod Brown
U.S. Senate
503 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rob Portman
U.S. Senate
448 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Brown and Senator Portman:

As the officials tasked with administering elections in Ohio, we are committed to ensuring fair, safe, and secure elections. The lead up to our primary election on April 28 revealed the significant new challenges we will face this year in performing our responsibilities as we protect the health and safety of our voters, staff, and poll workers. We are proud of all the work election officials across the state have done to ensure that every Ohioan could have their vote counted this spring. But the measures put in place came with a significant cost, and we know we have much more work ahead of us to prepare for November. While we applaud Congress for approving \$12.9 million in election funding for Ohio through the CARES Act, we believe that this amount falls short of what is needed for safe and secure elections in 2020. Because of this, we urge you to support substantial additional funding for elections in the next coronavirus stimulus package.

When it became clear that changes to the Ohio primary election would be necessary to protect public health, county officials worked overtime with Secretary LaRose to ensure that every Ohio voter could safely cast a ballot. Through an ambitious and unprecedented public outreach effort, we successfully encouraged nearly 2 million Ohioans to request a vote-by-mail ballot for the primary election – a 421% increase from absentee turnout in the primary four years ago. At the same time, county officials worked with health officials to create as safe of an environment as possible for voters and poll workers. We did everything we could to make sure no voter had to choose between their vote and their health.

But the procedures and resources needed to hold safe and secure elections come with a significant and unexpected cost. We must be prepared to manage our November election, which experts and officials expect to have one of the highest voter turnout rates in our state's history, under similar conditions as we believe that the pandemic will continue to impact voter preferences through November, even if it is contained. A recent analysis released by the Alliance

for Securing Democracy, the Brennan Center for Justice, Pitt Cyber, and R Street Institute estimated that it will cost Ohio \$70 - \$82 million to prepare elections for the COVID-19 pandemic this year. And local election officials will bear over 90% of these costs.

County election officials have proven that we can hold elections this year that protect the right to vote and the public health. And we know what it will take to do so once again in November. We urge Congress to partner with us in this endeavor and to provide us with the resources we need to ensure that all Ohioans can have their voices heard in 2020.

Thank you for your leadership and partnership.

Respectfully,



Michelle L. Wilcox, CERA, OREO
President of the Ohio Association of Election Officials
Director
Auglaize County Board of Elections

Cc: Members of the Ohio Congressional Delegation
Leader Mitch McConnell
Speaker Nancy Pelosi
Leader Kevin McCarthy
Leader Charles E. Schumer