

WRITTEN TESTIMONY

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before the
**Government Oversight Committee
of the Ohio House of Representatives**

On

**H.B. 1
135th General Assembly Special Session**

Chairman Peterson, Vice Chairman Thomas, Ranking Member Humphrey and members of the Government Oversight Committee, thank you for the opportunity to give written testimony on H.B. 1. My name is Scott Pullins and I am a longtime election law attorney. I have regularly appeared since 2004 before the Ohio Elections Commission and the Federal Elections Commission on behalf of legal clients.

Over the years I have prosecuted numerous election law complaints on behalf of candidates, political parties, and political action committees. I have also defended numerous complaints on behalf of candidates, political parties, and political action committees. Additionally, I have been involved over the years on behalf of local liquor option elections, zoning issues, and other issue-based campaigns.

I write to you today to express my strong support for H.B. 1. I want to acknowledge and thank State Representative Seitz both for bringing this legislation forward and for his willingness to listen closely and take suggestions.

H.B. 1 is very simple legislation. It simply prohibits foreign nationals, as they have long been defined under both state and federal laws, from contributing or spending money in Ohio elections. Unlike the Senate passed legislation, this bill does not prohibit Permanent Residents with Green Cards from donating as they have long been permitted to do.

I have heard concerns expressed about new language requiring that the Ohio Elections Commission refer violations of the foreign giving ban only to the Attorney General of Ohio. I

have no concerns about this language. I would have concerns, as did the County Prosecutors Association of Ohio, in referring all Commission cases to the Attorney General.

Referrals to prosecution by the Ohio Elections Commission are extremely rare. In fact, during the long history of the Ohio Elections Commission they have only referred a total of seven cases to the Franklin County Prosecutor.

Most recently I was lead counsel on behalf of a complainant that brought an extensive complaint against former Governor's candidate Joe Blystone. Despite the vast evidence of his egregious misconduct, the Commission still did not want to refer the case for prosecution. The case did end in the largest monetary fine ever levied against a Ohio political candidate along with an agreement by Mr. Blystone to not seek public office again for a period of five years.

Ohio law is woefully behind in updating its overall campaign finance legislation. Nonetheless, the purposes of this Special Session are solely limited to two items: foreign donations and placing President Biden on the Ohio general election ballot. I will be more than happy to assist the Committee in the future on additional campaign finance issues as they arise. Thank you.