



## Cass County Information Technology

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### TESTIMONY ON HOUSE BILL NO. 1405

House Committee of Political Subdivisions  
January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2023

Chairman Longmuir and members of the Committee:

My name is Bob Henderson, Director of Information Technology for Cass County. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on HB 1405. I am here to oppose the bill as proposed.

Cass County serves a large, diverse population in both heavily metropolitan locations, as well as large areas of mostly rural cities and townships. In our efforts to serve these citizens, starting in 2020 Cass County migrated from a precinct-based voting structure to utilizing vote centers. These vote centers allowed a citizen of Cass County to vote at any location that fit their personal needs, schedules, and requirements, regardless of their precinct of residency.

As part of these changes, Cass County has been expanding their vote center deployment during each election to better serve our voting populace. We have implemented marketing campaigns informing voters that they may vote at any vote center, which voters have appreciated. We have expanded to non-traditional locations, such as West Acres Mall, to allow as many qualified electors as possible to attend with minimal change to their day-to-day activities. Vote Centers have allowed us to position ourselves near locations of public transit hubs, childcare, education facilities, major roadways, and other critical markers to make voting as easy and hassle free as possible.

#### **SECTION 2. AMENDMENT, PAGE 3, LINES 1 – 4**

This section of the proposed bill would limit our capability to provide flexible voting locations to our citizens. By limiting the number of **precincts available per vote center** (Page 3, lines 1-3) as well as the **availability of a precinct being limited to a single vote center** (Page 3, Lines 3-4), we are forcing a qualified elector that resides within a specific district to only be allowed to vote in a **single, predetermined location**. By doing so, we are potentially putting undue hardships onto this qualified elector, as they may work in a completely different section of the County, requiring them to travel out of their way to be able to vote. In many cases, a qualified elector may not have access to a vehicle in the time frames that their predetermined location would be available, nor would Public Transport have routes providing coverage to all of these locations.

Election day and early voting vote centers have differing venue requirements and this section fails to distinguish the difference between election day and early voting. Unlike the election day vote centers, early voting vote centers generally operate the week preceding the election and provide flexibility to a much smaller voting population. Early voters include those who may be



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unavailable on the day of the election to vote in person or those who would like to avoid election day line ups. Due to the lesser demand of early voting, Cass County opens a much smaller number of early voting locations that are both available and located in desirable high traffic locations. By limiting the number of precincts available in any vote center, it would be required to open a larger amount of vote centers to separate the precincts as requested. This would reduce voter accessibility and increase the hardship and cost of locating and preparing these locations, as it is difficult to find areas that are readily accessible to the public while meeting requirements such as parking, accessibility, restroom access, connectivity, and availability for the entire early voting period.

Chairman Longmuir and committee members, I appreciate your time in looking at my opinions on this critical bill. Once again, I want to reiterate that I am opposing this bill. An approval of the bill as written will not only make it more difficult to vote in Cass County, but will also require more time, effort, and funds to be utilized to do so.

Sincerely-

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