



11 September 2020

Senator Sherrod Brown
Representative Marcy Kaptur
Representative Marcia Fudge
Representative Tim Ryan
Representative Joyce Beatty

Sent Electronically

Senator Brown and Representatives Kaptur, Fudge, Ryan, and Beatty,

Thank you for your support of my request of the Ohio Controlling Board for next Monday, September 14 to permit me to use existing resources within my office's budget to pay the return postage of absentee ballots for all voters who choose that method of voting this fall. As you correctly state, I have the legal authority to pay the cost of postage for voters returning their absentee ballots and need only the spending authority from the legislative branch through the Controlling Board.

Essentially, your letter is asking me to defund our county boards of elections of the CARES dollars that have already been obligated by those boards to run a safe, secure, and accurate election. As a reminder, at the Controlling Board meeting on June 15, I sought and received approval to spend the \$12.8 million that Congress sent to Ohio for elections related expenses through the CARES Act.

Paying the postage of returned ballots for the November 3 election is a request I first made of the General Assembly in May. It was not part of the request considered by the Controlling Board on June 15. As my office shared with Representative Kaptur at her request on August 3, almost all of the CARES dollars, nearly \$11 million, were provided to our county boards of elections. Of the remaining CARES dollars, my office spent the vast majority – roughly \$1.5 million – to send an absentee ballot request to every eligible voter. The minimal remaining unencumbered balance is not nearly sufficient to pay for statewide return postage and is needed to provide our county boards of elections a safety net for unforeseen emergency purchases to carry out safe, secure, and accurate elections this fall.

Ohio's county boards of elections desperately need and are already using the CARES dollars to hire additional staff, acquire necessary election infrastructure like mail processing equipment, and purchase personal protective equipment for their staff, poll workers, and voters. The suggestion that I take those resources away from the county boards of elections and use them

to pay for the return postage on absentee ballots, especially when the resources exist within my office's business services budget to do just that, simply does not make sense.

Finally, while I again sincerely appreciate your support of my request to the Ohio Controlling Board, please avoid using a quote of me out of context as that may negatively impact your advocacy efforts. You quote me as saying in March that "a plan that does not afford every Ohioan an opportunity to vote free of charge would be unconstitutional." As you know I was referring to the legislature's plan to conclude the Primary Election in an all vote by mail process. I was not referring to the General Election in which Ohio voters will have, in addition to absentee voting, four weeks of in-person, early voting and 13 hours of in-person voting on Election Day.

Thank you for your support of my request.

Yours in service,



Ohio Secretary of State