



**Michigan House of Representatives
House Elections Committee
May 23, 2023**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 4568, repealing Michigan’s ban on rides to the polls. Fair Elections Center is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to removing barriers to registration and voting through advocacy and impact litigation. The Center’s Campus Vote Project educates and engages young voters on voting rights issues, working to institutionalize civic engagement and voting at university and college campuses, including in Michigan.

In Michigan, both individuals and organizations, including nonprofit groups, are generally prohibited from paying someone to drive voters to the polls for an election.¹ Although individual volunteers can transport voters to the polls, organizing programs that reimburse volunteers for expenses such as their time, gas, or mileage to help others get to the polls to vote is not allowed. Rideshare companies like Uber and Lyft are also prohibited from offering Michiganders discounted or free rides to the polls as they do in other states. This ban makes Michigan an outlier as the *only* state that prohibits paid rides to the polls. In every other state, pro-voter organizations may operate programs specifically designed to drive voters to the polls. These programs make voting more accessible for seniors, college students and other young people without cars, and individuals with disabilities.

The ban also has raised difficult questions for student organizers and universities who want to help their students access the ballot. For example, ambiguities under the law have included whether a full-time college staff member can drive students to the polls as part of their official job duties, and whether academic institutions can rent a vehicle and allow a salaried staff person to drive it to the polls. Organizations and academic institutions should be able to freely engage in these activities to support student voting without fear of violating the law.

HB 4568 would repeal this ban, making voting more accessible for voters who need help getting to the polls. Many Michiganders do not have their own vehicles or are unable to drive, and public transportation is unavailable or inadequate in many places. For example, young people are increasingly less likely to drive than earlier cohorts. Due to the growing cost of owning a car and access to more transportation options for daily life like Uber and Lyft, college students today are less likely to have driver’s licenses than they were in the past. In 2021, only 60% of 18-year-olds nationally had a driver’s license.²

¹ Mich. Comp. Laws § 168.931(1)(f).

² <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/policyinformation/statistics/2021/dl20.cfm>

As a result, the ban on paid rides falls most heavily and disproportionately on young people including college students, voters with disabilities, seniors, and lower-income voters, as they rely heavily on accessible transportation options to exercise their freedom to vote.

In sum, by simply deleting a line in statute, HB 4568 would bring Michigan in line with other states where voters without their own transportation have the opportunity to get help accessing the polls. Fair Elections Center and its Campus Vote Project urge swift passage of this bill.

If you would like further information, please feel free to contact Michelle Kanter Cohen, Policy Director and Senior Counsel at Fair Elections Center, at mkantercohen@fairelectionscenter.org, or Landon Myers, Michigan State Coordinator for the Center's Campus Vote Project, at lmyers@campusvoteproject.org.