



**Interested Party Testimony on House Bill 110 - Operating Budget
Senate Finance Committee
Nazek Hapasha, MPA - League of Women Voters of Ohio
May 10, 2020**

Chairman Dolan, Vice Chair Gavarone, Ranking Member Sykes, and members of the Senate Finance Committee: Thank you for accepting my testimony today. My name is Nazek Hapasha, program associate at the League of Women Voters of Ohio. The League has proudly been working for over 100 years to encourage the active and informed participation of Ohioans in government, and was honored to be a founding member of the Ohio Debate Commission in 2018. Accordingly, **we strongly support Amendment HC0816 to HB110, which would provide public funding to the Ohio Debate Commission.**

Why is the ODC important? In 2019 the Pew Research Center reported that a large majority of Americans perceive American political debate to be more negative (85%), less respectful (85%), less fact based (75%), and less substantive (60%). Founded in 2018, the Ohio Debate Commission exists to combat these issues and ensure that Ohio's political debates are fair, substantive, and serve the public interest. Supported by a partnership of diverse, nonpartisan civic and media organizations, the ODC immediately became a trusted authority in Ohio by setting a standard for political debates, holding quality debates for statewide office, and encouraging civic groups across the state to hold local debates.

Why should the ODC receive public funding? Fair and substantive debates organized, produced, and distributed by a nonpartisan organization will help ensure a stronger Ohio. ODC is a trusted, tested, statewide partnership that provides nonpartisan, accessible, and easily digestible voter information to a broad spectrum of the electorate. They inform voters on the most critical issues of the day and candidates' stances on them, and level the playing field for under-funded candidates. Ultimately, this work will ensure that Ohio's electorate is well-informed and that our elected officials and public servants are the most highly qualified.

I ask you to consider my testimony and vote yes on the amendment to providing funding to the Ohio Debate Commission. ODC has an excellent track record of serving voters and candidates equally and fairly through a transparent process, and its future will be more secure in doing so with this funding.

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit written testimony.

The League of Women Voters of Ohio was formed in May 1920 out of Ohio's woman suffrage movement. The League is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. The League has over 4000 members and 32 local Leagues across the Buckeye State.