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TESTIMONY

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

SB 141 – Election Law – Polling Places on College Campuses

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January 25, 2017

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Thank you for the opportunity to submit this letter regarding Senate Bill 141. This bill would establish a polling place at each senior institution of higher education that has residential student housing on its campus.

MICUA member institutions support and encourage civic activity on campuses and launch “Get Out The Vote” efforts for every election. Active civic participation is critical to our democracy. MICUA supports the intent behind this legislation; however, a number of MICUA member institutions expressed concern about the implementation of the bill. For instance, one MICUA member campus has a polling location that is only two blocks from campus in a public library. In that instance it makes little sense to force the Board of Elections to move the polling location to private property at added expense and inconveniences. Furthermore, numerous institutions with limited parking expressed concern about inadequate parking to accommodate large numbers of voters. Some MICUA campuses with ample parking were amenable to the concept of a polling location on campus, because it could result in a positive experience for both students and local voters.

Senate Bill 141 treats urban, suburban, and rural campuses identically. MICUA requests that the committee consider that a one-size fits all approach could have unintended, negative consequences for some campuses and local voters. Perhaps allowing the Board of Elections greater flexibility to select campus sites as polling locations would best serve the public and the institutions.