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Chair Rosenbaum and members of the Senate Rules Committee:

I am a retired school librarian, residing in Senator Burdick's district. I am writing in support of SB 1544, which proposes changes to the Citizens' Initiative Review Commission.

The Citizens' Initiative Review (CIR) is a process by which panels of Oregon voters review ballot measures and write up findings about the measures. The findings are included in the OR Voters' Pamphlet. The Citizens' Initiative Review Commission oversees the running of these voter panels, including the selection of measures to be reviewed.

I was a panelist on the first CIR pilot panel, in 2010. I am also a current member of the Citizens' Initiative Review Commission (CIRC). Participation on a review was a way for me and other voters to have direct involvement in our State's political process. It enabled us to provide reliable, trustworthy information from which voters could make decisions. The CIR process has been, and continues to be, evaluated to ensure objectivity, fairness, and lack of bias on all levels.

My participation on the pilot panel introduced me to the CIR process and convinced me of the value of this kind of citizen participation. For one week citizens from all walks of life put aside their differences and worked together for the good of Oregon voters. All opinions were heard and considered before a group decision was made. It felt great to work together for a common good. My participation on the Commission enables me to continue to support the work of these citizen panels.

I endorse the Citizens Initiative Review process because it:

- Gives citizen panels access to the most comprehensive information available. This information is not readily available to OR voters.
- Gives the panels time to deliberate as a group in order to consider opinions and form conclusions.
- Provides an objective, reliable source of information from which voters can make decisions.

SB 1544 proposes some minor changes to the functioning of the Citizens' Initiative Review Commission:

- Allows the Commission to test an abbreviated 3-4 day review process and set compensation for panelists. These changes provide options which would allow for increased efficiency in running the panels.
- Increases the number of former panelists, thus increasing citizen participation in the review process.

Neither of these proposed changes alter the intent or results of the CIR panels.

SB 1544 also proposes lifting the 2015 sunset date that was imposed on CIRC during the last legislative session. Upon realizing semi-independent status, CIRC has: set administrative rules, developed its biennial budget, and contracted for administrative and program services. CIRC has also begun preparations for the 2014 initiative reviews.

Ballot measures have become a significant and complicated part of Oregon's election process, and they have a big financial impact on our state. Oregon's CIR process provides objective information which can help voters make informed decisions. SB 1544 ensures that this process will continue.