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April 21st, 2015

To: Senate Committee on Rules
From: Mario Parker-Milligan, Oregon Student Association
RE: Support of SJR 5

Chair Rosenbaum, Vice-Chair Ferrioli, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for hearing this critical issue facing our democracy and collective liberties. The Oregon Student Association represents over 120,000 students in Oregon's public universities and community colleges. We were established in 1975 by students who sought to represent and serve the collective interests of students in postsecondary education in Oregon. This means we have a vested interest in registering, educating and turning our members out to vote. In 2012 this resulted in OSA registering over 50,000 students to vote, and in 2014 over 55,000 students registered to vote. We executed one of the largest non-partisan voter engagement campaigns in our state's history. Engaging students in this manner allows us to more authentically advocate for budgets which create affordable opportunities for Oregonians to gain a higher education. We also advocate for policies which increase the quality of education, life, and safety for students in our institutions.

After a lengthy debate, student leaders across the state decided this was indeed an important bill to students because we believe elections should be fair and accessible to all. A state which aims to make campaigns fair and accessible to everyone establishes limits on campaign contributions. Unless we set these limits we fear our power in numbers shall always fall waist side to the power which is brought with money. Our individual voice and inherently votes are becoming less and less meaningful, even more so after the election is determined. Students believe we need actual checks and balances with contributions to candidates for office. Transparency is not enough if an individual or corporation is allowed to contribute money without limits.

We strongly believe that contribution limits for campaigns for elected office will give the people of Oregon a greater sense of trust in their government and give elected officials more accountability from their constituencies and to say the least, time to govern over fundraising for their reelection.

This bill is about altering the relations of power and providing more equitable opportunities for all Oregonians to influence our elections, rather than a fraction of the population determining the outcome with a swipe of their pen on a checkbook. We shouldn't be dreaming of a society or a state controlled by a few wealthy individuals but rather a society built on the dreams of the masses. Our state should take pride in our strides in making voting a less restrictive right that could easily be accessed by anyone who is eligible. We need to address the other side of elections and place greater accountability on those who seek to limit the individual voice. Please support SJR 5.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Mario Parker-Milligan
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