



Testimony in Support of SB 1586 A

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February 24, 2016

Co-Chairs Steiner Hayward and Smith,

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on Senate Bill 1586 A. ONA represents more than 14,000 registered nurses, nurse practitioners, clinical nurse specialists and public health nurses in nearly every health care setting conceivable. Oregon's nurses have a strong history of supporting policies that increase civic engagement in our state as well as the voice of nursing in public policy decisions. As such, we offer our support of SB 1586 A.

We have already begun to see the significantly positive effect of Oregon's new Motor Voter law as thousands of new voters have been registered, many of whom may have otherwise experienced barriers to participation in our democratic process. SB 1586 A helps further enfranchise voters in our state by reducing costs to the individual in providing both prepaid ballot postage and increased young voter education as well as ensuring ballot drop site proximity for all.

According to recent research from Stanford University, voting helps strengthen social ties in our communities and is in turn connected with greater quality of life and longevity. Additionally, a 2001 study in the American Journal of Public Health reports that people are more likely to self-report "fair" or "poor" health in regions with below-average voter participation. Oregon's nurses recognize the positive impact that strong civic participation can have for health outcomes and in fostering robust, engaged communities that take ownership around key policy decisions affecting their livelihood.

SB 1586 A would provide a very reasonable investment in our state's voter registration infrastructure to better connect new and young voters with access to critical non-partisan elections information. Ensuring that voting information is more integrated throughout our public universities and community college campuses is a common sense measure that will promote stronger engagement from voters who have often faced historical challenges to participation.

ONA nurses understand that when we reduce barriers to accessing services in our communities, stronger and more positive outcomes are often realized. SB 1586 A represents another effective step forward in helping promote greater participation in Oregon's electoral process and allow more voters a voice in our state's democracy.

ONA urges your support for SB 1586 A.