



**TO: Joint Sub Committee on General Government**  
**FR: Nikki Fisher, Executive Director Oregon Bus Project**  
**DA: February 24, 2016**  
**Re: Support for SB 1586**

Co-chair Steiner Hayward, Co-chair Smith, and members of the committee:

My name is Nikki Fisher and I am the Executive Director of the Oregon Bus Project. The Oregon Bus Project is Oregon's leading organization focused on millennial outreach, voter engagement, voter education, and building strong and impactful leadership development programs for our future leaders. Our unique advocacy is organized by young people for young people. We are an organization focused on engaging young people in the democratic process by making it fun and accessible. The Bus drives votes, it drives leaders and it drives change.

The Bus Project knows that our democracy is at its healthiest and most robust when citizens can participate with ease and voice their opinions and views through voting.

We support SB 1586. We understand the postage portion of this bill will likely be amended out today with the -7 amendments. We are disappointed because we believe this is a critical change but we absolutely support the other two factors of the bill moving forward.

We support adding additional drop box locations near college campuses. Right now, many college students have limited access to cars and often walk and use public transit. We need citizens to be able to turn their ballots in as easily as possible. Opponents of this bill have stated that it's easy to drop off your ballot, but we know that for many people it is not so easy. The closest drop off box to Umpqua Community College in Roseburg is 7.7 miles away from campus.

We believe with SB 1586, Oregon could take an important step forward and remove additional barriers to participating in democracy by adding drop box locations and ensuring students are able to register their peers to vote.

There are some inaccuracies floating around about the second piece of this, vote by mail with business reply postage that we want to clear up. First is that the bill is business reply not pre-paid postage like some media outlets have reported. So the charge is only if the mail is returned, not postage paid on all ballots.

Young people, working families, and many Oregonians are shifting the way we communicate.

- We've don't mail resumes or applications instead we email them.



- We don't mail payments; we pay our bills, our tuition, and our student debt online. We online bank.
- We don't compile our year-end tax documents in a folder we pay our taxes online.
- Mail is simply something that more and more Americans do not use.

According to the United States Postage Service report, A Decade of Facts and figures, the total mail volume of USPS has dropped drastically by 56.3 billion units in 10 years. Americans are mailing fewer and fewer packages and letters and we aren't carrying stamps like we used to.

We believe that requiring a stamp to mail your ballot is a true barrier and we worry not having a stamp dissuades voters from participating in elections. A stamp costs .49 cents today but it does not just cost .49 cents it costs the time it takes to get that stamp as well. We encourage you to try to purchase a single stamp. Can you make it to the post office between 9am and 5pm while you're working? Do you have time to stop at the grocery store before picking your kids up to get a stamp? If you go to the grocery store, your option to buy a book of stamps is \$9.80. This isn't about "lazy" kids, but rather about a changing world.

The right to vote is a fundamental principle of democracy. To vote, each individual citizen must take the time to consider each candidate and each issue, whether sitting down to caucus in Nevada, or stand in line at a polling station in South Carolina. Here in Oregon you can vote in the privacy of your own home, and it takes time. It takes time to consider your choices and your values. It is the act of voting that is a responsibility and a privilege, not the act of finding a stamp.

According to a Pew Charitable Trust Article, right now, currently 56% of Oregonians drop off their ballot into a drop box location. The first reason was convenience. The second most popular reason respondents gave in Oregon was the desire to save the cost of postage.

For Oregonians without homes, for Oregonians living paycheck to paycheck, and for so many Oregonians who have very little extra time in the day we know that a stamp can be the deciding factor of whether or not they have the time to turn their ballot in and have their voice heard. We believe that the state of Oregon can make a major difference in voter participation by removing this barrier. Thank you for your time and consideration.