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February 28, 2017

To: House Rules Committee  
From: Kate Titus, Common Cause Oregon  
Re: Support for HB 2578

I submit this testimony on behalf of Common Cause.

### ***Common Cause***

Common Cause is a national nonpartisan organization that works for open, honest and accountable government, helping to strengthen public participation and faith in our institutions of self-government, and to ensure that government serves the general public interest. Here in Oregon, we have a statewide supporter base of 17,000 Oregonians.

### ***Support for HB 2578***

Last year Common Cause brought together a coalition of 30 organizations that worked together to successfully pass similar reform in Portland, for Portland city elections. What we know is that there is exceptionally strong public support for reforms like this that address the public's frustration with the influence of money in the political process and desire for more representative government. We intend to continue this work to enact reform for our state-level elections.

This bill aims to give everyday people a bigger voice in Oregon politics by making small contributors a more powerful force in elections and by reducing candidates' reliance on wealthy special interests. Similar programs around the country have proven to increase participation and small-dollar contributions from constituents – especially among communities of color and low-income households. These small-dollar matching programs also reduce barriers for people from diverse backgrounds to run for office and incentivize candidates to spend more time talking to ordinary constituents rather than spending a lot of time raising money from affluent ones.

I would argue that this bill is not only in the public interest, but it's in *your* interest as state legislators. It's a safe bet that none of you ran for office to get rich. You've stepped up because you are dedicated to public service. And yet, you serve at a time of deep public cynicism and lack of respect for government. I suspect you too would rather spend more time listening to and representing constituents rather than fundraising from a small political donor class. And I suspect you too would prefer to be part of an Oregon Legislature that is more fully representative of the state's racial, economic, age, and gender diversity. And you would probably rather have people respect rather than mistrust your dedication and service. I hope we can work together on this bill.

**Common Cause supports HB 2578 to establish a small-donor matching program and urges you to vote this out of committee for consideration by your colleagues.**