



Date: March 27, 2017

To: Joint Committee of Ways and Means Subcommittee on General Government

From: Maureen Barnhart, Oregon Education Association, House District 31, Senate District 16

Re: Comments on Oregon Secretary of State Budget

Co-Chair Manning, Co-Chair Smith and members of the committee,

My name is Maureen Barnhart and I teach 4th grade at Lenox elementary in Hillsboro. As a member of the Oregon Education Association I work to engage other educators in the electoral process because the decisions made by elected officials directly impact our ability to provide students the education they deserve.

The Secretary of State's budget presentation indicated that there may be cuts to funding for Oregon's voter's pamphlet. We are concerned that these priorities are out of line with what voters would prioritize. We are concerned that Director Trout testified that the printed voter's pamphlet was not essential to run elections and we disagree. In a time when Oregonians are inundated with information the voter's pamphlet arriving with information about everything on the ballot in one place is a critical resource that ensures everyone has information. In fact, as House District Leaders for the Washington County Democrats, my spouse and I have been introducing our neighbors to the changes that were made when we were re-districted into House District 31. Invariably our neighbors, including the new residents of the North Bethany area, have thanked us with the comment that they will be looking over voter's pamphlet information to help them form their opinions.

The Oregon Voters' Pamphlet is a resource created by and for the electorate. Those submitting statements pay a fee to do so and the statements are measured against set benchmarks. The result is a nonpartisan tool that each Oregon voter can use in their homes to make their decisions and participate in democracy. To move a resource like this to electronic availability would also present a challenge for Oregonians without internet access at home. 56,000 people in Oregon don't have any wired internet providers available where they live.

We strongly encourage this committee to protect Oregon voter's access to electoral information and not move forward any budget that would limit voter access to electoral information. The Oregon Voters' Pamphlet is the single most important source of accurate and impartial information about the candidates and ballot measures voters must decide on every

election. A top priority of the Secretary of State should be to ensure every Oregonian receives it in their mailbox, just like their ballots.

We are also concerned about the reductions in outreach staff and join Disability Rights Oregon and other groups in asking for a more detailed plan on how outreach will work moving forward. The Help America Vote Act resources are supposed to go towards decreasing barriers to voting that individuals may face because they have a disability.

Educators encourage this committee to dig into the details of the Secretary of State's proposed budget in order to determine if it is prioritizing access for all Oregonians, and services that help people vote. Please prioritize increasing participation in elections and direct services first.