



TO: House Committee on Rules
FROM: Nancy Haque & Amy Herzfeld-Copple, Basic Rights Oregon
DATE: April 6, 2017
RE: Vote YES on HB 3422

Chair Williamson and Members of Committee:

On behalf of Basic Rights Oregon, we are asking for your support for HB 3422, a bill related to the observation of the Secretary of State signature verification process for initiative petitions. This bill strengthens our democratic process by ensuring transparency and public access during signature verification and ensures it is clear, protected and includes an appeals process.

Basic Rights Oregon was founded more than 20 years ago in response to ballot measure efforts to amend our state constitution to deny basic civil rights to LGBTQ people. Over the decades, we have seen significant changes in the way initiative petition drives have moved from largely a volunteer driven process to paid signature gathering efforts. Both systems have experienced problems with intentional and unintentional violations of process and procedure. Allowing for citizen observation of the signature verification process has boosted confidence in the process, even when we dislike the outcome. This bill would enshrine the value of transparency that Oregon has cherished for two decades.

Groups across the political spectrum and on various sides of an issue have the ability to observe, and in some cases, raise concerns throughout the process of an initiative petition's qualification. Ballot measures often address critically important issues—such as civil rights, immigration policy, and more. It is vital to the health of our democracy that there be clear and legally codified processes for citizen review of signature verification, that includes the ability to raise concerns with the Secretary of State's office, if needed.

By supporting HB 3422, you will ensure that our state's values of a free and transparent democratic process will continue for future generations of Oregonians through citizen involvement in the signature verification process.

Thank you,

Two handwritten signatures in black ink. The first signature is "J. M. Haque" and the second is "A. Herzfeld-Copple".

Nancy Haque & Amy Herzfeld-Copple
Co-Executive Directors