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Dear Chair Holvey and Members of the Committee,

The foundation of a healthy democracy requires robust civic participation and true representation in policymaking and leadership roles. During the Civil Rights Era, the Federal Voting Act of 1965 was passed to address legal barriers in elections that prevent underrepresented racial minorities from exercising their right to vote. At-large voting systems have been repeatedly struck down as a violation of the Act because they lead to systematic underrepresentation of racial and ethnic minorities. A white majority paired with elected positions voted on at-large creates election systems that allow the white majority to select every position. These archaic systems are a violation of our civil rights and make it challenging for historically underrepresented communities to enter the political process.

HB 3310, Oregon's Voting Rights Act, would ensure Oregon is in line with the Federal Voting Rights Act and that every Oregonian has a fair opportunity to elect a candidate of their choice. Oregon's demographics are rapidly changing and diversifying. Yet, at-large voting systems are still being used to elect school board leaders and policymakers across the state.

Latino Network is a culturally specific organization dedicated to providing transformative services to Latino youth, families and communities in the areas of education, leadership and family stability. We believe representative leaders on school boards who understand the specific strengths, needs, cultures and experiences of children and families of color will help address the opportunity gap and strengthen our education system. We urge you to support HB 3310, Oregon's Voting Rights Act. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Amanda Manjarrez

Director of Advocacy
Latino Network