



Support for HB 3310

April 15, 2019

Chair Holvey, Vice Chairs Williamson and Wilson, and members of the committee,

My name is Samantha Gladu and I represent the Bus Project. Our mission is to amplify the voice and leadership of diverse young people to achieve a more just and equitable Oregon. As an organization that builds political power and strong, effective leadership pipelines for young people, our work and our communities are greatly impacted by the reality that at-large voting systems lead to systematic underrepresentation of racial and ethnic minorities.

When a jurisdiction has a white majority, and selects elected representatives like those on school boards, education service district boards, or community college district boards, in at-large elections systems, this allows the white majority to select all of the representatives. All too often, the white majority selects and elects people who look like them and bring similar life experiences. **At-large, single-winner elections exclude people of color from representation on city councils, county commissions, and school boards across Oregon.**

We see this play out in a variety of jurisdictions in Oregon, and as you'll hear and read numerous times in relation to this bill: 7 of the 10 most diverse communities in Oregon have never had a person of color elected on their school boards. That is unacceptable. For government to be accountable, and representative, all voices need to be heard.

Legislative action is required to fix this because while Oregon cities and counties, and school boards have some powers to change their electoral methods to ensure all voters have a voice, the path to change is not always easy. Often, it requires a ballot initiative and all the time and money that entails.

The Oregon Voting Rights Act was an idea that came out of Pathways To A More Racially Just Democracy, a process engaged by 35 Oregon organizations to identify the most impactful democracy reforms in the state. We know that when our elected officials more accurately reflect Oregon's demographics, we can achieve better policy outcomes for our communities--policies that advance racial and gender justice, and that build an economy that protects and provides for workers and their families. This policy has strong bipartisan support and is necessary for us to shape a more just democracy.

The Bus Project asks that the committee vote in favor of House Bill 3310. This is a valuable and critical step to ensuring that our fundamental rights apply to all Oregonians.

Sincerely,
Samantha Gladu, Executive Director, The Bus Project