



April 15, 2019

Chair Holvey and Members of the House Rules Committee,

Forward Together asks for your strong support of HB 3310 to ensure that elections are fair and that community driven solutions be the core of a strong Oregon Voting Rights Act.

Forward Together works in Oregon and nationally to win rights, recognition and resources for all families. Since our founding in 1989, we have continually fought to dismantle the ways our society marginalizes us based on race, gender and sexuality. Today, we build courage and foster connection among our multi-racial community of change makers to secure the rights, recognition and resources all families need to thrive. HB 3310 takes a much needed step in that work by creating a community driven process to align electoral structures with Federal law.

Oregon is home to 220 school districts, including 15 large districts with more than 9,000 students. Oregon school district elections default to at-large (ORS 332.124), though the district may choose to nominate by zone, that is, to reserve seats for candidates who live in a particular district. Or they may choose to elect by zone / district (ORS 332.126). This is not consistent across the state, for example, Salem-Keizer is an at-large school district while Newberg school district is zoned. This often means that while some districts can have proportional representation on the board from zones across the district, at large school districts do not benefit.

OVRA does not create new electoral requirements beyond the Federal Voting Rights Act, but simply allows local communities to bring this problem to their jurisdiction with a solution they believe will work. One person, one vote has been a bedrock principle in our democracy. But that's not happening in communities across Oregon. From school boards to county commissions, Oregon's underrepresented communities don't have equal voice in elections. We can follow the lead of other states to change this, making it easier for all communities to be represented.



The OVRA empowers local governments to fix this widespread problem. We urge your support of HB 3310, the Oregon Voting Rights Act.

Sincerely,

Michele Ruffin

Oregon Advocacy Manager

Forward Together