



Joint Ways and Means Subcommittee on General Government
Re: HB 5034 - POP 207

April 24, 2019

Co-Chair Wagner, Co-Chair Smith, and Members of the Subcommittee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of paid return postage on ballots (POP 207) in HB 5034. My name is Jenny Lee, and I'm the Advocacy Director for Building Power for Communities of Color, a nonprofit dedicated to policy advocacy for communities of color that will help us achieve a more equitable Oregon.

A strong democracy relies on every voice being counted. Oregon has made great strides in increasing access to voting, and paid return postage on ballots is the next step to higher voter participation. It will remove barriers to voting and help communities engage more fully in Oregon's civic life.

For Oregonians struggling to make ends meet or care for their families, traveling to buy a stamp or to drop off a ballot can be a genuine barrier that reduces their likelihood of voting. Rural voters often have to travel a significant distance to get to their drop box site and face higher transportation costs. For voters of color, income disparities and family caretaking responsibilities may ultimately result in lower participation.

Providing paid return postage will also profoundly shift how we can increase voter participation. Culturally-specific organizations are developing ballot assistance programs to help community members vote, but right now, assistors cannot give people stamps to mail their ballots. Paid postage will resolve this by transforming every mailbox into a ballot drop site and enable community-based organizations to help more people vote.

Pre-paid postage is an investment in our democracy. We respectfully urge you to approve funding for paid return postage on ballots. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony, and for your service to our state.

Sincerely,

Jenny Lee
Advocacy Director
Building Power for Communities of Color

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