



March 4, 2021

Chair Smith Warner, Vice Chair Drazan, Vice Chair Holvey, and Members of the House Rules Committee,

PCUN, Oregon's Farmworker Union, is writing in support of HB 2745, the Voter Access Act, and a related language access bill, HB 3021. At PCUN, we work to empower farm workers and working Latinx families and to improve the working and living conditions of Oregon's agricultural workers. We are based at the heart of the Oregon Latinx community, and in one of the most vibrant agricultural areas in the state.

Many of our members are engaging with the political process for the first time and, in many cases, find barriers along the way. Our communities are rarely targeted by political or candidate campaigns leaving eligible voters with the feeling that their vote is unimportant. As we directly engage with farmworkers and Latinx voters, we also spend a lot of time and resources collecting data. There is a lot of value in collecting self-identified race, ethnicity, and preferred language data which is to ensure that their voices are being accurately represented. The communities we serve are consistently undercounted in multiple systems, from the census to student populations, which reinforces the long traditions of disenfranchisement. However, our work engaging with voters of color at the door or on the phone has significantly improved turnout for these groups. One of the most common barriers we hear from these voters is lack of complete understanding of English and limited resources to support them in their preferred language. This lack of language accessibility creates the conditions for lower voter turnout among communities of color.

Fortunately, the Voter Access Act, also known as HB 2745, ensures that voters can voluntarily provide their preferred language, in addition to race and ethnicity. We also see a great advantage to a companion concept in HB 3021, which would require the Secretary of State to create and make publicly available a list of five most common languages spoken and ensure state voters' pamphlet and county voters' pamphlet are translated into each of five identified languages and to make translated voters' pamphlets available on county websites. These bills will strengthen our democracy and ensure that Oregon is living up to the values we set around inclusion for all. Ensuring adequate access to language materials in the languages that voters understand is a key element to a fair, effective, and responsive electoral system in Oregon.

We urge you to vote yes on HB 2745 and HB 3021.

Sincerely,

Ira Cuello-Martinez
Policy Associate
PCUN, Oregon's Farmworker Union