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Good Afternoon Chair Smith Warner, Vice-Chairs Drazan and Holvey, and Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Devin Ruiz, I use she/her pronouns, and I am the Community Engagement Organizer at Next Up Action Fund, formerly known as the Bus Project. Our mission is to build political power with diverse young people to achieve a more just and equitable Oregon. As an organization that builds political power and strong, effective leadership pipelines for diverse young people, our work and our communities are greatly impacted by the proposed requirement that registration cards and electronic voter registration pages include the ability for Oregonians to give optional demographic information. We are in strong support of HB 2745.

This bill is an important step towards addressing the need to create a more representative democracy. As an organization that does youth electoral organizing work, we have seen the impacts of data systems that assume whiteness as the standard and limit our ability to do targeted outreach to Black, Indigenous, and youth of color. When whiteness and English remains the standard, communities of colors are disproportionately impacted and their ability to access targeted voter outreach, education, and assistance to participate is limited. HB 2745 will also reduce language barriers by confirming which households need language-specific outreach which in turn will help Next Up Action Fund and other community led organizations in boosting voter engagement.

The idea to allow Oregonians to self-identify their race, ethnicity, and preferred language in the voter registration process is not new, as we would be following eight other states who already collect this information. Oregon is a national leader in it's innovation and dedication towards having accessible and equitable elections. Passing HB 2745 is an important way to further increase equitable outcomes for communities of color, and a practical step to continue expanding participation for all people in our democracy. I urge a yes vote on HB 2745.

Thank you,

Devin Ruiz
Community Engagement Organizer, Next Up Action Fund