



Emily Wanous

OSA Legislative Director

emily@orstudents.org

(541) 240-1432

Dear Chair Dembrow and members of the Senate Education committee,

For the record, my name is Emily Wanous and I am the Legislative Director for the Oregon Student Association. OSA advocates for college affordability and accessibility; representing over 80,000 students at community college and university campuses across Oregon. **I am testifying in support of SB791**, which would create more equitable access for communities through the adoption of Rank Choice Voting (RCV).

Our current electoral system tends to favor candidates with greater access to resources, such as money and networks, which makes it difficult for community-driven candidates to get elected. In addition, our current system allows for strategic voting, such as "split voting" that discourages similar candidates from running and makes it especially hard for folks of color and women who disproportionately have been marginalized in the campaign realm. Voters deserve to leave strategy out of the voting process and Rank Choice Voting gives voters that autonomy.

When we consider the various ways the State can dismantle barriers for all Oregonians, Rank Choice Voting gets us a step closer by reducing the barriers to entry and allows for greater participation for both, the candidate and the voter. While altering the way our electoral system works seems overwhelming, many municipalities have been using Rank Choice Voting already, including but not limited to the State of Maine, New York City, and San Francisco. Their success proves that this system works. Research that studied the impact of Rank Choice Voting in these municipalities show that the number of women holding office doubled and more people of color are winning office in proportion to their share of the population.

The facts are clear. The time is now. If we have learned anything from this past year, it is that democracy should represent all of the people it serves. Rank Choice Voting will get us closer to our goals and will build onto Oregon's national credibility related to our voting systems.

Thank you for your time and I urge your yes vote on SB791.

Sincerely,

Emily Wanous

Oregon Student Association