



March 16, 2021

Chair Rob Wagner
Vice-Chair Fred Girod
Members of the Senate Committee on Rules

RE: SB 791 – Ranked choice voting

Chair Wagner, Vice-Chair Girod, and members of the Senate Committee on Rules:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of SB 791, Ranked Choice Voting, which will create more equitable access for communities of color to our political processes in Oregon. My name is Elona J Wilson, and I am the Advocacy Director at the Coalition of Communities of Color, an alliance of culturally specific community-based organizations with representation from African, African American, Latinx, Middle Eastern and North African, Native American, Pacific Islander, and Slavic communities in Oregon.

The Coalition of Communities of Color’s mission is to address the socioeconomic disparities, institutional racism, and inequity of services experienced by our families, children and communities; and to organize our communities for collective action resulting in social change to obtain self-determination, wellness, justice and prosperity.

In the United States, the political process has marginalized many communities, including Black, Indigenous, and other people of color. It favors candidates with more resources which makes a barrier for grassroots, community driven candidates to be elected. Under our current system, two out of three races in Oregon saw the majority of voters actually vote for a candidate other than the winner. SB 791 addresses this issue by shifting the manner in which we vote during nonpartisan races to a ranked choice voting system.

CCC’s member organizations serve diverse communities within our state and understand the importance of increased representation of their communities’ experiences and priorities. With a winner-take-all system, those interested in running for office may be discouraged by the risk of “splitting” votes, which weighs heavily on BIPOC candidates who may already face additional barriers to running. This is one of the ways we can make our democracy more accessible and increase diversity within our elected leaders, and this has been shown in other jurisdictions as the





number of women candidates elected has increased, and BIPOC candidates have been representative of the population..

Ranked choice voting is a way to strengthen our democracy so Oregon continues to be a leader in breaking down barriers to voting access and live up to our commitment, as a state, to equity and inclusion. Ranked choice voting ensures that every vote matters, We have seen this work in other states and locally within our own state. This is a tested and tried solution to address the disparities in the impact of Oregonians' votes and barriers to a diverse pool of candidates and elected officials.

On behalf of the Coalition of Communities of Color, I urge you to take action to strengthen our democracy and reinforce our commitment to equity and inclusion by supporting HB 2475.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elona J. Wilson".

Elona J Wilson
Advocacy Director
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