



Dear Co-chairs Senator Lieber and Representative Holvey, and members of the committee,

My name is Isabela Villarreal and I am the Policy and Communications Director at Next Up Action Fund. 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, our work and our communities are greatly impacted by our electoral systems. This is why we're in strong support of HB 2004, statewide ranked choice voting, and want to ensure that the measure has clear and accessible ballot language for all voters.

We deeply care about the youth vote, and know it's of the utmost importance to increase the political and civic participation of young people in Oregon. Young people are critical constituencies that experience a chronic lack of political representation and power in our electoral and legislative systems. We work to change this by directly reaching out to tens of thousands of 18 – 29-year-olds every single election cycle. Yet, we see and hear the disenchantment with our current political systems and how our electoral systems are set up. We have had countless conversations with young people from all over Oregon in which they have shared that they feel discouraged or intimidated participating in our elections given the lack of information about issues and ballot measures on their ballot, especially if it is their very first time voting. We often hear questions ranging from the process to register to vote, to how often elections happen, to how the mechanics of our current electoral system work.

As voters are presented with the opportunity to vote on whether they would like Oregon to switch to ranked choice voting for statewide and federal elections, it is crucial that the ballot language describes what ranked choice voting is and how it would impact them as voters. Currently, the drafted LC ballot language for HB 2004 does not provide a clear description of how ranked choice voting works or how it differs from our current system. This information is critically important for all voters to clearly understand before they are asked to vote on the measure and we are deeply concerned that the text as currently written does not address either of these pieces at all. Without a clear picture of what voters are being asked to vote on, we know that the communities we work with, will only feel more confused and disenfranchised.

Additionally, including language on the mechanics of voting in a ranked choice voting election, such as that voters can rank as few or as many candidates as they would like, will help voters have a clearer understanding of the system. This information, as well as an understanding of how a candidate wins in a ranked choice voting election, are important pieces to include in the ballot summary. We must ensure we are prioritizing voters' experiences and that HB 2004's ballot language gets voters the most important pieces of information in straight-forward, effective language.

We are committed to elevating the concerns that young people experience, and hope that you will prioritize ballot language that provides a comprehensive picture of how HB 2004 works on the November 2024 ballot.

Thank you,

Isabela Villarreal, she/her

Policy and Communications Director