



Date: January 11, 2024

Subject: Comment on ballot title for HB 2004

To: Joint Committee on Ballot Measure Titles and Explanatory Statements

From: Sam Guthman, APANO

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

My name is Sam Guthman and I am the Policy Manager at APANO, a culturally specific organization that unites Asians and Pacific Islanders to build power, develop leaders, and advance equity through organizing, advocacy, community development, and cultural work. Thank you for the opportunity to weigh in on the ballot language for HB 2004 and offer our suggestions to strengthen the existing version.

As Oregon's population of AANHPI communities continues to grow, we must ensure that we are creating access points for our communities to participate in our democracy at every step of the way. The ballot is a powerful tool for Oregonians to make transformative decisions about issues they deeply care about and are impacted by. For our AANHPI communities, the ability to build political power and have more meaningful choices to elect leaders that will champion our wellbeing is particularly crucial. With this being said, we are concerned about the way the HB 2004 ballot caption, results statements, and summary are currently written, given that the language feels unclear and convoluted.

As it currently reads, the ballot language is difficult to follow and does not provide a complete scope of what exactly it is voters are being asked to vote on. Interacting with a ballot and voters' pamphlet can already feel intimidating and overwhelming for many voters, which reinforces the need for precise explanations that can help guide voters, rather than deter them.

To strengthen the ballot language for HB 2004, we urge you to consider language that explains how our elections are currently conducted. This includes emphasizing that when electing a candidate, voters are restricted to picking one candidate for each office and that, ultimately, the candidate with the most votes is the winner even if that candidate does not win with majority support. People often think that candidates *already* need a majority of votes to win in our system now; and this version of the ballot language reinforces this misconception. It is important to include a description of our current system because it sets up a more accurate comparison between the current system and how ranked choice voting would change this system.



Regarding the measure itself, “ranked choice voting” does not tell voters what the new system is explicitly - we feel the ballot language should more directly portray that this measure simply allows voters to optionally rank multiple candidates for an office, and that candidates need a majority of votes to win.

Moreover, we believe that the ballot summary should focus on the key aspects of what the measure does, and that this should be a space to explain the mechanics of ranked choice voting. The draft ballot summary includes information about how the measure would allow local governments to adopt ranked choice voting; however, this is a small effect especially given local governments can already do that. The summary should primarily focus on how this will apply to statewide and federal offices, which are the more major policy elements.

Lastly, APANO is known to work with many communities that speak several languages, from Vietnamese, to Mandarin, to Tagalog, and countless others. Our communities have varying levels of English proficiency, and many prefer to access information in their native language. As we center language access in this context, it is essential that the English text can be readily and easily translated into languages other than English. The more descriptive language, the easier it is to translate.

Thank you once again for your work to design ballot language that will better help voters understand what their choice means when they see HB 2004 on their ballot in November.

Sam Guthman

Policy Manager

APANO