



Date: January 16, 2024
To: Joint Committee on Ballot Measure Titles and Explanatory Statements
From: Stephanie Phillips Bridges, Senior Policy Analyst for the Urban League of Portland
Re: LC 60 - HB 2004 Ballot Language

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

My name is Stephanie Phillips Bridges, and I am submitting this testimony on behalf of the Urban League of Portland. The Urban League of Portland is one of Oregon's oldest civil rights and social service organizations, empowering African Americans and others to achieve equality in education, employment, health, economic security, and quality of life across Oregon and SW Washington.

Thank you for the opportunity to uplift our concerns regarding the HB 2004 ballot language as is currently drafted by legislative counsel. We appreciate the hard work that legislative counsel has undergone to create this language and appreciate the diligence of the committee to evaluate how this language can be improved.

To ensure that our democracy here in Oregon continues to thrive and is strengthened, we must improve and broaden access. For us, access to the ballot means creating simple and digestible ballot language to encourage voters to partake in the questions that affect our systems of governance and elections. Black and African American voters face a multitude of barriers in participating in our electoral processes, and we are committed to reducing these barriers to increase participation from our communities.

An essential way to increase voter participation and engagement on the issues that we ask Oregon voters to consider is to ensure that voters are equipped with concise knowledge and information on their ballot. The current draft ballot summary describes how HB 2004 impacts local governments; however, we believe that the summary should focus on capturing the impact on statewide and federal races since these are the major components of what the measure does. Many voters may only read the ballot title and summary; thus, this is a key place to ensure that voters can understand the most major changes that are being proposed. The more concise the language is, the less likely voters are to experience voter fatigue.

Additionally, we noticed that the term "ranked choice voting" is included in the current draft ballot title which is concerning since this is not a term that is familiar to most Oregonians. Although this is a term that advocates may be familiar with, we must center everyday voters by using language that describes what this voting method actually is and how it works.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments. We are thankful for your work to make the ballot accessible to all Oregon voters.

Respectfully,

Stephanie Phillips Bridges
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