

June 20, 2023

Testimony in support of Bill #2004

Senate Committee on Rules

Chair Lieber, Vice Chair Knopp, and members of the Senate Committee on Rules,

My name is Thien, my pronouns are He/Him and I am the Field Organizer 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. We are part of a broad coalition of over 35 organizations, including culturally-specific organizations, labor unions, environmental groups, housing advocates, rural communities, youth-empowering organizations, and good government groups. I am writing to testify in strong support of HB 2004, a referral to the 2024 ballot that would establish ranked choice voting for statewide and federal elections if approved by voters.

In our current elections, fear of “vote splitting” is affecting both voters and candidates: Candidates are often deterred from entering a race for fear of splitting voter support and voters are often forced to choose a candidate with a better chance of winning, instead of the candidate they actually prefer. As a result, many Oregonians –especially people of color, working-class people, rural residents, and young people – are less incentivized to participate in our elections. With over 70% of Oregon voters “extremely” or “very” discouraged by politics, we need a solution that will empower voters by giving them a real say in our elections.

At APANO, we are looking to uplift BIPOC candidates into office. Ranked choice voting leads to better representation for people of color. By allowing voters to rank their preferences, it creates opportunities for candidates from diverse backgrounds to run for office and have a fair chance of winning. Traditional voting systems often disadvantage candidates from underrepresented communities, ranked choice voting helps address these issues and promotes a more inclusive political landscape.

Ranked choice voting also encourages candidates to engage in coalition building and outreach to diverse communities. In order to appeal to a broader range of voters, candidates must understand and address the concerns and priorities of different racial and ethnic groups. This leads to a more inclusive campaign strategy that considers the needs and interests of people of color, thereby promoting a more responsive and representative political process.



Overall, ranked choice voting provides a more equitable and inclusive electoral system that better serves the interests of people of color. It helps overcome the barriers and biases present in traditional voting systems, allowing for enhanced representation and greater participation from diverse communities

Ranked choice voting is Oregon's next step as a leader in electoral reform. As a representative of APANO, we ask that you please support HB 2004, which will refer this critical piece of legislation to voters for the 2024 ballot, and pass it out of committee.

Thank you,

**Thien
He/Him
APANO
Field Organizer**