

RE: Support Guaranteeing the Right to Vote, SB 579
Senate Committee on Judiciary

1/25/2023

Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, and members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Adam Gregg and I live in Portland. I am writing to testify in strong support for Guaranteeing the Right to Vote, SB 579, which will ensure every eligible Oregonian can register to vote, update their voter registration, and vote in elections based on where they resided prior to incarceration.

The right to vote is enshrined in our constitution and fundamental to a vibrant and participatory democracy. Yet, around 12,000 people in Oregon are currently denied their right to vote, leading to the disproportionate disenfranchisement of low-income, Black, Indigenous, and Latine people. Guaranteeing the Right to Vote fulfills the promise of our democracy while improving public safety, and addressing racial and socioeconomic inequities.

I spent almost 6 years in prison here in Oregon and was released in 2021. While inside I spent my time as a wildland firefighter and legal clerk. Both jobs gave me the opportunity to connect with the community in significant ways that paved the way for my continued success after release. I believe this is an important step toward expanding voting rights and humanizing those who are currently imprisoned.

As an Oregonian, I know that connection to community through civic engagement while incarcerated leads to healthier communities, that voting is a civic right and responsibility, and that we can address unjust impacts of mass incarceration.

I am not alone in my support for this important bill. This legislation is supported by over 40 civil rights organizations, faith-based groups, as well as dozens of currently and formerly incarcerated people. Please ensure that Guaranteeing the Right to Vote, SB 579, is passed out of committee.

Thank you,

Adam Gregg