

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

January 25, 2023

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

My name is Raygan Rivera and I live in Washington County. 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.

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.

There is an urgent need for progress in our democracy that integrates an evolving sense of decency into policies in order to move Oregon past archaic and prejudiced practices to recognize the inherent value of incarcerated Oregonians. There is tremendous power in feeling like part of a community that values its member.

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.

Oregon must embrace the opportunity to lead on this issue because in recognizing the humanity of our fellow human beings, we pay ourselves the highest tribute. Please ensure that Guaranteeing the Right to Vote, SB 579, is passed out of committee.

Thank you,

Raygan Rivera