

Submitter: Amanda Coven
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Judiciary
Measure: SB579

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 Amanda Coven 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.

As the Director of Education at the Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education, I often speak with students about the signs of a healthy or frail democracy. Without fail, students always raise access to voting rights as an example. They fundamentally understand that a strong, healthy democracy relies on civic participation. As such, citizens being guaranteed the right and having the access to vote is essential to our democracy.

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 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. Withholding constitutional rights such as voting is a danger to democracy, and as civic leaders, you have sworn to uphold the Oregon constitution. Please ensure that Guaranteeing the Right to Vote, SB 579, is passed out of committee.

Thank you,
Amanda Coven