

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 Amber Gomes and I live in Bend. 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 am privileged in so many ways, but one of my privileges should not be access to the ballot. That is a right that should be open to as many Oregonians, and indeed Americans, as possible. It's a generalization sure, but I believe one of the things that makes Oregon special is Oregonians commitment to community. Everyone who lives here is a member of the community. We cannot act like they don't exist. And if they exist, they should be able to easily and efficiently vote. Oregon is a leader in the country when it comes to access to the ballot. We should be a leader in this issue as well.

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,

Amber Gomes