

To: Senate Committee on Judiciary
From: Kate Titus, Common Cause Oregon
Re: Guaranteeing the Right to Vote (SB 579)
Date: January 26, 2023

Common Cause

Common Cause is a nonpartisan organization that works for open, honest, accountable government. We are 1.5 million Americans – including roughly 30,000 Oregonians – working together to realize the unfinished promise of democracy.

Why SB 579 Matters

As Oregonians, we value our freedom to have a say in the decisions that impact our lives and communities. Even across our many differences, we're bound together by a shared commitment to the freedom to vote.

Nevertheless, there are always some who seek to disenfranchise others. We continue to overcome a legacy of laws and practices, evolved through this country's history of colonialism, slavery, and exploitation, which serve to obstruct and deny access to the ballot. Even here in Oregon – despite the state's current reputation as a voting rights champion – we continue a practice of disenfranchising voters who are incarcerated, stripping them of this most fundamental right, and alienating them further from the communities to which they will eventually return. This practice serves no one and is unnecessary. Neither Maine nor Vermont have ever denied their citizens voting rights while incarcerated, and Oregon shouldn't either.

Committee members, it's now in your hands to right this wrong. Common Cause appreciates your consideration of this bill and urges your support and leadership.