

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

**January 26, 2023**

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

My name is **Mary Megan Shipley** and I live in unincorporated city of **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.

As a nurse-midwife and mother of 2 teenagers, I hold strong opinions and carry powerful emotions about the rights of all people in these times of increasing division and authoritarianism here in the U.S. and beyond our nation. I have come to recognize through socially responsible journalism, that incarcerated individuals are largely invisible in our society. That makes it easier to ignore and deny their rights. We all make mistakes, but the right to vote is an important way for all Americans to positively connect with the institutions that hold our fragile democracy together.

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,

**Mary Megan Shipley**