



January 26, 2023

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

My name is Liz Marquez and I am submitting testimony on behalf of PCUN, Oregon's Farmworker Union. At PCUN, we work to empower farmworkers and working Latinx families and improve their working conditions through community building, organizing, and policy advocacy.

Our organization is in strong support of SB 579, Guaranteeing the Right to Vote, 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.

Due to biases and inequities in our criminal legal system, low-income, Black, Indigenous, and people of color are more likely to be incarcerated. In Oregon, there are around 12,000 people who are denied their right to vote, leading to low-income, Black, Indigenous, and Latinx people being disproportionately disenfranchised.

As we work to reimagine our criminal legal system, one of the first changes we can make is to restore voting rights to people who are most impacted by that system, inside and outside prisons. We believe that legislation is best shaped by people who are directly impacted and want to highlight that Guaranteeing the Right to Vote emerged from community conversations with currently and formerly incarcerated people about the importance of voting and civic responsibility.

Making sure Oregonians can vote while incarcerated allows them to feel involved in their communities, and increases the success of reintegration when they come back. Voting also allows incarcerated people to advocate for their children and loved ones who remain in their communities. Oregon can continue to lead in protecting and expanding voting rights as it has done in the past through initiatives like universal vote by mail, automatic voter registration, paid postage, postmarked ballots on elections day, and pre-registration for 16–17-year-olds. This is because Oregon's legislators have recognized that voting is a civic right and responsibility.

Guaranteeing the Right to Vote fulfills the promise of our democracy and addressing racial and socioeconomic inequities. We urge you to support SB 579 and pass it out of committee.

Thank you,

Liz Marquez Gutierrez  
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PCUN