



RE: Support Guaranteeing the Right to Vote, SB 579

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

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 579. My name is Sol Mora and I am the Advocacy Director at the Coalition of Communities of Color, an alliance of culturally specific community-based organizations dedicated to cross-cultural collective action for racial justice.

For over twenty years, our coalition has worked to address institutional racism within our local and state governments and create viable pathways for communities of color to obtain self-determination, justice, and access to opportunities.

Time and time again, we have heard from the communities we serve that they feel excluded and face barriers to participating in our election system. Oregon has been a leader in breaking down these systemic barriers, but the obstacles our communities face are multi-faceted. This includes the disenfranchisement of incarcerated people, which disproportionately impacts those who are most systematically excluded in our democracy, including people of color and low-income Oregonians.

An individual's incarcerated status should not make them less than in the eyes of our democracy - after all, voting is a right, not a privilege.

Participating in Oregon's elections affects the ability of communities of color and systemically excluded communities to elect leaders that will champion issues that support their wellness, prosperity, and reflect their values. The decisions of elected representatives impact every resident, regardless of whether they are eligible to vote. These decisions have material consequences on how and whether our communities are able to access services.

SB 579 is a key step to break down the barriers Oregonians experience in exercising their right to vote, while ensuring that every eligible Oregonian can partake in our local and state democracy so they can have their needs actualized.

Additionally, research shows that civic engagement, including voting, increases individual wellbeing and contributes to positive public health outcomes by encouraging communities to shape their social, economic, and political environments. Voting promotes connection and relationship-building between individuals within a community.



On behalf of the Coalition of Communities of Color, I ask that you **support Senate Bill 579** to ensure all eligible incarcerated Oregonians have a voice in our elections. This is an opportunity for Oregon to address its historically racist past and move towards a truly inclusive future.

Thank you,

Sol Mora
Advocacy Director
Coalition of Communities of Color