

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

1/26/2023

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

My name is Natalie Seals and I live in downtown 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.

I work in a public defense law firm, and we believe in rights here, and that everyone deserves all the same rights, the same dignity, no matter their life experiences. The justice system strips away both rights and dignity with abandon, leaving those most vulnerable to have their lives ruined for the smallest of life decisions. Everyone deserves to have the right and the dignity to vote on matters that affect themselves and their families. Period.

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,

Natalie Seals