

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 **Cicely Thrasher** and I live in **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 someone with family members who have been incarcerated, I've seen firsthand how important it is for people to maintain ties to their community. Many incarcerated people feel deep shame about the wrongs that they've done and get stuck in a cycle of feeling helpless and hopeless. By allowing incarcerated people to exercise their constitutional right to vote, it will allow them to take a step in a positive direction.

If we truly want safer communities and lower rates of recidivism, we should be encouraging incarcerated people to care, build and actively participate in civic engagement. When people feel invested in their communities, they will be empowered to become productive members of society upon their release.

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,

YOUR NAME

