



January 26, 2023

To: Senate Committee on Judiciary

RE: Support Guaranteeing the Right to Vote, SB 579

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

My name is Blanca Gaytan Farfan and I am Policy and Communications Director at Participatory Budgeting Oregon. We work for more participatory and just public budgeting for all Oregonians by centering the expertise and leadership of underrepresented communities. 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.

Voting is a right and opportunity for our communities to participate civically. This is critical for all, and especially for underrepresented communities who have historically been pushed aside from involvement in any type of civic participation, whose voices are continuously not heard, and whose needs are not met.

This is a matter of justice. But it is more than that. We all benefit when all voices are heard in making public decisions. When a segment of a community is not at the table, we all suffer from worse public policy. And our "right to vote" is diminished to a mere privilege when denied to some. As a result everyone's voice and vote in our democracy is less secure. Guaranteeing the Right to Vote fulfills the promise of our democracy while improving public policy, and addressing racial and socioeconomic inequities.

Please support SB 579 and pass it out of committee.

Thank you,

Blanca Gaytan Farfan
Participatory Budgeting Oregon