

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

January 27, 2023

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

My name is Angelica Paz Ortiz and I live in Portland, Oregon. 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.

This issue is deeply personal to me due to my connection to people who have been incarcerated, both family members and friends. Folks who are incarcerated are deeply estranged from the community they once knew and feel responsible toward. Having the right to vote will change that. I am also a mental health professional and know that isolation is one of the greatest weapons that may be wielded against one's humanity. The current climate creates a sense of isolation from the community they will likely one day return to. Accessible voting is a hallmark of Oregon politics and passing this bill is in line with what we have to be proud of as members of this community. All Oregonians deserve the right to vote.

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,

Angelica Paz Ortiz