

Submitter: Elona Wilson

On Behalf
Of:

Committee: House Committee On Emergency Management, General
Government, and Veterans

Measure: HB2650

Chair Grayber, Vice-Chair Tran, Vice-Chair Lewis, and members of the committee,

For the record, my name is Elona J Wilson and I am the Executive Director of Next Up Action Fund. Our mission is to build political power with diverse young people to achieve a more just and equitable Oregon. As an organization that builds political power and strong, effective leadership pipelines for diverse young people, our work and our communities are greatly impacted by who is at the decision making table. This is why we strongly support HB 2650, which will better ensure that workgroups are equitable and support the voices of those most impacted.

Right now, as I am giving this testimony, over half of our base are in classes – a clear barrier to engage with this process. Similarly, workgroups often meet at times and places that are inaccessible for young people which excludes crucial voices from the political process. HB 2650 would change that.

In 2022, after HB 2002, a broad criminal justice reform package, did not pass during the 2021 session, Senator Prozanski helped convene a workgroup that balanced the voices of people directly impacted by the criminal legal system, community-based organizations, and state and local agencies. This is one example of how to build an equitable workgroup space, and we appreciate Senator Prozanski's commitment to doing so. This bill seeks to mimic that process for all workgroups and task forces.

HB 2650 will do the following:

Require specific levels of participation in workgroups and Task Forces from community-based organizations, people directly impacted by the policy being discussed, and historically excluded communities;

Ensure that workgroups and Task Forces center the voices of those who have been excluded from the democratic process;

Create a payment system to ensure that people are paid for participation in these workgroups when they are taking time away from their lives, especially when policy is not related to the person's day job. And we wanted to be sure that the per diem system does not result in people losing other public benefits (e.g. SNAP or OHP) - so the solution in our bill will prevent such benefit loss.

Oregon makes better policy when more voices are at the table. At Next Up Action Fund, we know the backbone of a strong society and democracy is the ability for everyone to participate in it. HB 2650 moves us closer to that vision, and thus, I

strongly urge the committee to vote in support of HB 2650.