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Chair Lieber, Vice-Chair Knopp and members of the Senate Committee on Rules:

I am Shemia Fagan, Oregon's 28<sup>th</sup> Secretary of State. My mission is to build **trust** between the people of Oregon and their state government so that public services can make a positive difference in people's everyday lives. We build trust by removing barriers to voting, providing accurate information, and supporting Oregon's 36 county clerks who process ballots and report accurate results.

False information has had a measurable impact on public trust in elections, with 6 in 10 Americans saying they are not satisfied with the way democracy is working in the U.S. Election systems are critical infrastructure, but we don't fund them like critical infrastructure. There has been little statewide leadership addressing the funding for elections administration at the local level and that is why I have prioritized meeting with all 36 County Clerks and visiting every office to see each operation firsthand. That is also why I also supported securing federal funding for elections and working on this new effort to research and learn about staffing, resources and constraints here in state to help identify a path forward to support our critical infrastructure. We hope to make recommendations based on a current study on local election administration funding needs.

The Election Security Bill ([SB 166](#)) includes three security pillars that will help restore public confidence in our elections systems.

**Affirming the right to vote and the right to a secret ballot.**

In practice, our clerks ensure a secret ballot but we want to affirm this right by codifying it. Right now, there are no explicit provisions affirming the right to vote or the right to do so with a secret ballot. Affirming these important fundamental rights for Oregonians would help reassure voters that their vote is secure and that their ballot is their own business.

**Protecting the safety of election workers.**

In 2022, the Legislature passed the Election Worker Protection bill ([HB 4144-A](#)), which for the first time created specific penalties in law for threatening or harassing election workers. Increasing the penalties beyond a basic misdemeanor would reinforce to bad actors that there are

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repercussions for targeting elections workers and trying to influence the outcome of an election. The January 6 Report also made a request to protect election worker ([Page.691](#)). This measure sends a strong message to would-be provocateurs that threats, and harassment will not change the outcome of an election, and there are serious consequences to those actions.

**Improving elections security at the county level.**

Currently, statute requires counties to submit annual security plans each year before Jan 31. The legislative concept would improve those plans by giving the Secretary of State additional time and greater ability to evaluate the threat that environment security plans are intended to address, by adding cybersecurity and physical security to their scope, and by requiring security plans to be consistent with best practices as defined by federal authorities. In an environment where even the perception of a security issue can be amplified by disinformation campaigns, we must do everything we can to ensure the security of our elections systems.

These changes will help clarify elections law and improve trust in our democratic process.

I urge your passage of [SB 166](#).



Shemia Fagan  
Oregon Secretary of State