



March 14, 2023

To: Senate Committee on Rules
From: Oregon Education Association
RE: Support for SB 169 -2

Chair Lieber and members of the Senate committee on Rules,

The Oregon Education Association represents over 41,000 educators and education service professionals across the state, from pre-k to community colleges. Our members are classroom teachers, bus drivers, custodians, teacher assistants, school counselors, community college professionals and more.

On behalf of our members, the OEA would like to express our enthusiastic support for SB 169 with the -2 amendment. This bill will create an important expansion for access to the ballot for many communities across Oregon. In 2021, the Oregon legislature passed the VPS Language Access Act, [HB 3021](#), which directed the Secretary of State to work with counties to translate voters pamphlets to the top five most commonly spoken languages, and then directed the SOS office to create a Translation Advisory Council to guide the ongoing work in a culturally relevant way and through translation best practices. Since the implementation of this important work, it is clear from the outreach that the SOS office and community organizations received we continue to innovate the ways in which we ensure access to the ballot.

The voter pamphlet statement brochure is one of the most critical tools at a voter's disposal. It provides invaluable information, and instructions for how to fill it out, that everyday Oregonians use to decide who best represents them in this democracy. Ensuring adequate access to the voter's pamphlet statement materials in the languages voters understand is a key element of a fair, effective, and responsive elections system in Oregon. The OEA supported the introduction of the VPS Language Access Act in 2021 and we continue to express the support of expansion because we see access to the ballot as a critical component of civic life.

If we truly believe that language access means the right to understand and be understood, we must ensure we are living these values through our policy and our long-term commitment to its implementation. This includes ensuring that we invest in solutions such as SB 169 -2 so that across cultures, languages, and communities we see greater access to the ballot and further participation in our elections.

Sincerely,
Michele Ruffin
Government Relations Consultant
Oregon Education Association