

RE: Support Statewide Ranked Choice Voting, HB 2004  
House Committee on Rules  
03/16/2023



Chair Fahey, Vice Chair Breese-Iverson, Vice Chair Kropf, and members of the House Committee on Rules,

My name is Colin Cole and I am testifying on behalf of More Equitable Democracy Action, a racial justice organization that focuses on transforming electoral systems, where I serve as Policy Director. I am writing to testify in support of HB 2004 as one small part of the wide coalition supporting establishing ranked-choice voting across the state of Oregon.

Ranked-choice voting is good for all voters, but it's especially good for those who historically are underserved by and underrepresented in government, like people of color, women, and the working-class. In particular, we would like to speak strongly in favor of this bill's provisions regarding local elections.

Last November, Portland made history by adopting the proportional version of ranked-choice voting, a voting method endorsed by the Department of Justice to resolve vote dilution under the Federal Voting Rights Act. Proportional elections were once widely used in the U.S., including in major cities across the country like New York, Cleveland, and Sacramento, before 1950s repeal efforts led by openly racist<sup>1</sup>, sexist<sup>2</sup>, and anti-immigrant campaigns rolled use of proportional elections. Portland's victory marks a major step forward for the modern American civil rights movement.

With local jurisdictions already turning to ranked choice voting, it is simply good, smart policy for Oregon to provide county clerks with tools for successful implementation, and not force them to reinvent the wheel each time. Creating a statewide ranked choice voting infrastructure will give local jurisdictions the resources they need to be successful.

As a proven election reform with growing support across the county, voter education resources and strategies have already been developed. For other local jurisdictions looking to adopt ranked choice voting, access to these resources would help ensure all voters across the state understand and are comfortable with ranked choice voting ballots.

By giving local jurisdictions the ability to opt into using ranked choice voting for local elections, HB 2004 will create an infrastructure with standardized, multilingual and culturally responsive education tools and resources that these jurisdictions can use.

Ranked choice voting is a proven solution and Oregon's next step as a leader in election reform. Please support HB 2004 and pass it out of committee.

Thank you,

Colin Cole (*he/him*), Policy Director  
More Equitable Democracy Action

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<sup>1</sup> "In Cincinnati, race was the dominant theme in the successful 1957 repeal effort. ... PR opponents shrewdly decided to make race an explicit factor in their repeal campaign. They warned whites that PR was helping to increase black power in the city." [A Brief History of Proportional Representation in the United States](#)

<sup>2</sup> "The Post's story stressed the degree to which the city's press viewed women's political empowerment as something to be derided." [Defining Democracy: Electoral Reform and the Struggle for Power in New York City](#)