

Date 5/1/2023

Aquene Briggs

Good afternoon Co-Chairs Steiner and Sanchez and members of the Committee,

My name is Aquene and I am an Intern and a Facilitator of Youth Voice Youth Vote. I am here today to testify in support of Youth Voice Youth Vote PB and to urge the Joint Ways & Means Committee to fund a 2nd Cycle of Youth Voice Youth Vote PB with \$1.2 million in the 2023-2025 Oregon State Budget.

Since joining the Youth Voice Youth Vote Steering Committee last year, I can speak from personal experience about how powerful and transformative this experience has been for me and the young people in our communities. Through this program, I have gained knowledge about budgeting, public policy, and advocacy that I would not have been exposed to otherwise. In addition, I've gained leadership experience and improved my interpersonal skills by learning how to collaborate and communicate well with young people from all backgrounds and viewpoints.

Youth Voice Youth Vote is a tool for young people to take action and contribute to finding answers to the problems we face. Youth are faced with numerous social issues, and inequities are increasing at a disproportionate rate compared to the awareness of solutions available.

With Youth Voice Youth Vote, we have been able to collect ideas directly with the community and develop project proposals that can be voted on by many and be implemented in real time. It's a way to create a solution and participate in an accessible manner.

Funding Youth Voice Youth Vote PB promotes deeper democratic engagement and civic participation, encourages voting in elections, and increases transparency and accountability over public spending.

I urge the committee to support Youth Voice Youth Vote and allocate \$1.2 million in the 2023-2025 Oregon State Budget. Thank you for your time and consideration.

## **The Ask & Key Talking Points:**

We urge the Joint Ways & Means Committee to fund a 2nd Cycle of Youth Voice Youth Vote PB with \$1.2 million in the 2023-2025 Oregon State Budget.

## **Key Points:**

### **Why Invest in Youth Voice Youth Vote PB?**

- Youth Voice Youth Vote engages youth and young adults to amplify their voices and votes in decision making on public investments in their communities. It is an investment in youth and in East Multnomah County and North Clackamas county, a geographically a community that has historically been underinvested.
- PB Deliberation tool for communities across different identities to learn from each other, gain deeper understanding, and advance shared solutions.
  - Youth are faced with numerous social issues and inequities are increasing at a disproportionate rate compared to the awareness of solutions available. Youth Voice Youth Vote is a tool of action for youth to help create solutions to the issues they face.
- Build on the learning and relationships from the 1st Cycle of Youth Voice Youth Vote PB to increase impact and learning to expand PB in Oregon.
- Youth Voice Youth Vote PB is an opportunity to continue bringing a form of participatory democracy to Oregon that is rapidly spreading around the world and put diverse youth in the driver seat of leading this democratic innovation.

### **Civic Leadership Pipeline**

- Youth Voice Youth Vote PB is an accessible way for the community to participate civically; For example, traditional legislation and budgeting processes are very complex and challenging to participate in for the majority of Oregonians. With Youth Voice Youth Vote, have been able to collect ideas directly with the community and develop project proposals that can be voted on by many and be implemented in real time - a way to create a solution and participate in an accessible manner.
- Youth are centered in the process and continue to be involved. 22 youth leaders have been shaping the entirety of this process. Many youth have taken on additional roles to support the execution of the public facing process and others have been involved in internally shaping and executing the communications and outreach efforts to maximize youth engagement. Over 1,000 youth have participated and want to stay involved.

### **Sharing Power with Community:**

- Elected officials have the power to allocate public funds to address Oregonians needs and aspirations for healthier, more just communities. But electeds also have the power to share some of that budgeting power itself. That is the power we are asking you to exercise by funding a 2nd Cycle of Youth Voice Youth Vote PB. We urge you to share real power over real public money.
- Funding a second cycle of Youth Voice Youth Vote demonstrates continued commitment to equity, shared decision making with community, and investment in youth leadership.
- Young people have enormous untapped collective knowledge and expertise that can and should inform and direct the public investments made on their behalf.

### **Why Should Legislators Support Youth Voice Youth Vote PB?**

- Electeds gain greater insight from constituents on the problems impacting them. Youth historically are missed in traditional civic participation spaces, but are deeply impacted by decisions made on their behalf. PB creates opportunities to learn about problems impacting communities that may otherwise be missed and get solutions directly from their communities.
- Increase transparency and accountability over public spending and fosters more trustworthy government.
- PB promotes deeper democratic engagement and civic participation, and encourages voting in elections.
- Democrats in the Oregon Legislature have said that one of their top three priorities for the 2023 legislature is “strengthening our democracy.” PB can complement and strengthen representative democracy (not substitute for).
- Better Data on Community Priorities: The more people who participate over multiple cycles would increase the quantity and quality of data about what constituents value and prioritize when given the power and the responsibility to make budgeting trade-offs. Over-time this information can be used by elected officials to set priorities in the traditional budgeting process.

### **Example:**

“As a member of the Youth Voice, Youth Vote Steering Committee, I worked with 11 other youth to design the first Participating Budgeting process in Oregon. Through this work, I have gotten to learn about PB, the importance of not only engaging youth and communities to give input, but putting these community groups in real decision-making spaces and having real power on how our public dollars are spent..

Youth Voice Youth Vote is only the beginning of Participatory Budgeting in our communities. We need to continue investing in youth and in East Multnomah County - communities of interest that have historically been underfunded and not heard in decision-making.

### **Closing**

- Thank the members of the elected body (city council, school board, commission, committee, etc.)
- Restate your request, acknowledge your community members and partners in attendance, if applicable, and thank the members.

*Example: "Thank you Joint Ways and Means Committee members for your service and dedication. Once again, I urge the Joint Ways and Means Committee to invest in youth and allocate \$1.2 million dollars for a second cycle of Youth Voice Youth Vote. Thank you for your time."*