



February 23, 2024

**TO:** House Committee on Rules

**FR:** Preston Mann, Oregon Business & Industry

**RE:** Support for HB 4024 and subsequent amendments

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Chair Fahey and members of the House Committee on Rules:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 4024. My name is Preston Mann, and I am the Director of Political Affairs for Oregon Business & Industry. OBI is a statewide business association representing businesses from a wide variety of industries and from each of Oregon's 36 counties. In addition to being the statewide chamber of commerce, OBI is the state affiliate for the National Association of Manufacturers and the National Retail Federation. Our 1,600 member companies, more than 80% of which are small businesses, employ more than 250,000 Oregonians. OBI's primary mission is to strengthen the business climate in Oregon and protect jobs.

By way of context, OBI has participated in numerous campaign finance reform conversations over many years. The lens through which OBI has assessed prior campaign finance concepts has always consisted of a three-pronged test related to fairness, constitutionality, and whether candidates would be able to maintain control over their own voices. Though we anticipate additional amendments to clarify and improve some of the language before you today, the framework envisioned by the -3 amendment provides a strong starting point for this policy discussion.

First, with respect to the contribution limits outlined by the bill, we believe a system that resembles existing federal campaign finance limits, as the -3 amendment proposes, strikes the appropriate balance between limiting money in politics and allowing candidates to raise enough resources to effectively inform voters of their priorities and positions. Proposing limits that are any lower, or outright prohibitive, will inevitably result in the proliferation of dark moneyed independent expenditure committees that drown out the true voices of candidates.

Second, the proposal affirms that employers, unions representing workers, nonprofits, and community-based organizations have a right to participate in our elections. Speaking specifically on behalf of employers, we believe it is essential that the small businesses that form the backbone of every community in this state continue to have a seat at the table and an equal opportunity to engage in our democracy. We are vigorously opposed to any unconstitutional attempts to silence their voices.

And finally, the amendment expands on Oregon's longstanding commitment to transparency in elections. The language envisions novel new disclosure requirements for independent expenditure committees, bringing light to political dollars that might otherwise be kept in the dark, and proposes game-changing investments in the Secretary of State's office to improve the

accessibility, functionality, and utility of elections infrastructure, including the ORESTAR reporting system. The proposal also enhances penalties for election law violations and streamlines the enforcement process in a manner that is long overdue.

We recognize there will be many critics of this proposal. In truth, there are provisions of legislation that are not our favorite. However, policy decisions as complicated as this one often require compromise. To that end, this proposal is a good faith attempt to incorporate the best ideas from campaign finance reform advocates and a diverse group of stakeholders into a policy that works. Further, we strongly prefer legislative action over the prospective ballot measures that – well intentioned as they may be – threaten a litany of unintended consequences that would ultimately be a step backward for our elections.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 4024 and the framework before you today. We look forward to working with committee members on subsequent amendments.

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