
Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon

February 23, 2023

Chair Fahey, Vice Chairs Helfrich and Kropf, members of the House Committee on Rules,

My name is Cassie Purdy and I'm the Political Director for Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon and I'm here today to testify in support of HB 4024. PPAO is a leading advocate for the advancement of reproductive rights and health equity. We do this work by training community organizers in grassroots organizing, policy advocacy and voter outreach and education. Through our PAC we educate and support pro-abortion candidates at the state level. We do this work, in part, to ensure that we have a well-informed electorate who can hold their elected leaders accountable when there are threats to their bodily autonomy and sexual and reproductive health.

In an environment where the issues we advocate for have been highly politicized, we are known as a trusted resource when it comes to vetting candidates running for office on their reproductive rights values. In the last election cycle, abortion access was thrown front and center - voters demanded to know which candidates shared their values.

We're here in support of HB 4024 because right now, special interests and billionaires currently contribute millions of dollars to sway the outcome of Oregon's elections, paying for results that help them, while often hurting everyday people. Again - look no further than last election cycle, where more money was spent on the Governor's race than ever before in history and billionaires attempted to elect a candidate far out of step with Oregon's values.

Until we pass campaign finance reform and end the role of big money in politics, such as the compromise proposal before you in House Bill 4024, we won't be able to make government work for all of us.

Like their fundamental right to bodily autonomy, Oregonians have a fundamental right to know the true sources of the money spent to influence our elections. House Bill 4024 will shine a much-needed light on the big-money special interests trying to influence our elections.

There are a couple of aspects I'd like to speak to specifically, as someone representing a community based organization. We believe that HB 4024 strikes a good balance when it comes to placing reasonable caps on both direct and in-kind campaign contributions and protecting membership organizations' ability to engage in democracy work.

We want to ensure that trusted, values-based nonprofits and community-based organizations — from those based around protecting reproductive healthcare or advocating for LGBTQ+ rights or protecting the climate, to those led by BIPOC Oregonians — can continue their work. These organizations prioritize grassroots organizing, person-to-person direct voter engagement, multilingual voter outreach, and other voter education work - all of which are

critical for improving electoral engagement by Oregonians from all walks of life. We also want to ensure that newer, emerging grassroots organizations can meaningfully engage in similar ways in the future and that organizations that work with people historically marginalized by our electoral system - BIPOC Oregonians, immigrants, women and LGBTQIA+ and working class people - aren't cut out of the process by unnecessary barriers.

I want to be clear though, HB 4024 is not perfect and will not solve all the problems we need to address to level the playing field against candidates or other political players with unfettered amounts of money. We would love to see a publicly funded small donor program to allow working class candidates and supporters to leverage their collective resources.

But while HB 4024 doesn't achieve everything we hoped for, it is a workable solution to a problem that inevitably requires action. Some of the other options being considered, like IP 9, have provisions that could cause significant harm to organizations like ours, or emerging c4 organizations who do not have the financial or legal resources to navigate the complex system that IP 9 would establish. Further - the private right to action clause in IP 9 could threaten to silence these kinds of organizations who may not be able to fight an expensive legal battle. It's no secret to anyone that organizations like PPAO have political enemies, and a provision like this could put a target on the backs of organizations who engage on political issues that some see as divisive or controversial. The unintended consequences here could mean the silencing of communities and organizations seeking to bring attention to critical social issues out of fear of expensive and time-consuming legal action against them.

PPAO believes that reasonable changes to our campaign finance system in Oregon need to happen, and that voters deserve to have the transparency they need to understand where candidates' money is coming from. It's time. But that shouldn't come at the cost of hamstringing working class candidates and community organizations who do important, necessary democracy building work like voter education and grassroots organizing.

Hb 4024 would establish one of the most robust campaign disclosure systems in the country, and create reasonable guard rails for community and membership organizations to engage in the political process. We request the committee move HB 4024. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Cassie Purdy
Political Director
Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon