

Members of the committee-

My name is Reed Scott-Schwalbach, I am a high school Spanish teacher and the president of the Oregon Education Association, and I urge your support of HB 4024.

House Bill 4024 presents Oregon with a pivotal opportunity to address the undue influence of special interests and billionaires in our electoral process. Oregon should no longer delay action. It is better for the state to pass HB 4024 and limit campaign contributions for the first time, as well as mandate transparency in independent expenditures that will rise along with contribution limits. This legislation is a critical step toward rebalancing the scales of power and offering ordinary Oregonians a more equitable opportunity to participate in our democracy.

Transparency is a cornerstone of accountability in government, and HB 4024's requirement for full disclosure of campaign donations is a significant move towards ensuring that voters have access to critical information about the financial forces shaping our elections. The inclusion of funding and direction for the Secretary of State to improve their ORESTAR campaign transparency website is badly needed and will be incredibly helpful for anyone who wants to track the flow of money in politics. The system is currently outdated and where Oregon used to be a leader in transparency, we are now behind.

While no legislation is perfect, including House Bill 4024, it does represent a meaningful step forward in the pursuit of campaign finance reform. An improvement to this bill would be to adopt a public financing system that matches small dollar donations. Without the inclusion of this type of program, similar to what is included in Initiative Petition 42, candidates that come from non-traditional backgrounds will continue to be at a disadvantage compared to candidates like doctors and lawyers who have wealthy professional networks.

The path to a more just and inclusive democracy requires diligence and determination. While House Bill 4024 may not address every concern or challenge, its passage would signal a clear commitment to prioritizing the needs of the many over the interests of the few. Let us seize this opportunity to enact meaningful reform and ensure that our government remains for the people, by the people, and for the people.