



February 24, 2024

To: House Committee on Rules  
Re: Testimony In Favor Of House Bill 4024-3

Chair Fahey, Vice Chairs Helfrich and Kropf, members of the Committee:

My name is Liz Marquez Gutierrez, and I'm the Policy Manager at PCUN, Oregon's Farmworker Union. On behalf of our members, I am testifying in support of HB 4024-3.

At PCUN, we have registered 9,000 members, with a mission of empowering farmworkers through community building, organizing, and policy advocacy. Part of that work entails getting involved in the electoral process with the goal to continue bringing bilingual voting information and recommendations to farmworker communities, many of whom are Latinx, new citizens, and first-time voters who need a culturally competent approach.

PCUN endorses candidates that align with our mission and values around social, economic and racial justice with the central question of whether they support some of the most pertinent farmworker issues of our time. As you know, the average life expectancy of a migrant farmworker is about 49 years compared to 73 for the general U.S. population. This is why it's so important for us to educate leaders about issues farmworkers face and build relationships through PCUN's engagement in campaigns.

We also believe it is essential for PCUN to be able to support candidates of color, especially those from working-class backgrounds and first-time candidates. Research from political scientists at Emory University shows that while people of color represent 41% of the population of our country, they only made up 28% of general election candidates in 2022. Candidates of color also face significant barriers to raising money to communicate with voters. According to research from The Center for Responsive Politics, Hispanic Major Party Congressional candidates raised significantly less than white candidates as recently as 2018. If one of our members, or another person of color from a working-class background, were to run for the Legislature or another local office, they would face massive barriers. These candidates don't come from privileged backgrounds and have much less access to communities of potential donors and other forms of support.

PCUN and our members understand profoundly that the current electoral system is slanted in favor of candidates with access to traditional forms of capital. And we know that the people and businesses who can write the biggest checks often have the most influence over who gets elected to serve in public office. We believe that every Oregonian has the right to know who is spending money to influence elections, and we shouldn't be subjected to endless advertising from dark-money groups who intentionally obscure their identities. That's one reason why my colleague at PCUN, April Alvarez, is a chief petitioner of Initiative Petition 42, a campaign finance reform proposal that is currently being circulated with the aim of appearing on the 2024 general election ballot.

PCUN believes that the compromise approach represented in HB 4024-3 will significantly and sufficiently curb the role of big money in overpowering the voices of regular people in our democracy. Importantly to our members, it also recognizes the important role community-based organizations like PCUN play in participating in elections and supporting candidates while also placing a reasonable cap on their contributions so as to not create loopholes that can be exploited by players on any side of the political spectrum.

It also places reasonable limits on in-kind contributions, allowing community-based organizations like PCUN to continue participating in meaningful ways, even when they do not have the funds to participate in paid communications through independent expenditures. Additionally, by regulating staffing in-kinds on a term and person basis rather than a dollar amount, we can more easily encourage candidates who may need additional, culturally competent support to run for office and serve.

By passing House Bill 4024-3, we can limit campaign contributions, protect the voices of trusted community organizations, working people, people of color, and other historically marginalized communities, and get closer to a government that reflects our state and is accountable to us all. This proposal creates an equal playing field for organizations and individuals on all sides of the political spectrum, no matter how much money they have. PCUN urges you to vote 'Yes' on HB 4024-3.

Liz Marquez Gutierrez  
Policy Manager  
PCUN