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On Behalf Of:
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Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB210

When I first moved here from Ohio in 1999, I found Oregon's vote-by-mail system off-putting. I'd always voted on election day, waited in line, walked into a booth and made my choices. Of course, there were always issues or unknown candidates where I was unsure, where I wished I had more time to consider or that I'd don more research about. I sometimes left those choices blank. And then there was the time I was very sick with the flu and missed my one chance to vote. When voting is only allowed in a narrow window of 12 hours on a single day, some voters are going to miss their chance.

So I came to quickly appreciate Oregon's vote-by-mail system. I sit down with the voter booklet, with it's plethora of information on every issue and candidate, and take all the time I need to make my choices, as opposed to five minutes in a booth with a line of people waiting behind you. The booklet includes statements from a range of organizations sharing their positions on issues and candidates, and their reasons for them. Voting by mail also gives voters the time to do their own research. Bottom line, vote-by-mail makes voters better informed. And the extended time frame assures that more people have the opportunity to get their vote in, without illness, emergencies or last-minute obstacles preventing them from getting to the voting booth.

I've heard opponents of vote-by-mail say it's rife with voter fraud. That's simply not true, and has never been proven to be true. I'd like to share an example of how vigilant the Oregon Election Board is on this issue. My son was injured in an accident which resulted in a permanent change in his signature. After sending in his ballot, he received a notification questioning the change, and asking for a written explanation for the change in his signature. They are definitely checking signatures.

I also appreciate the use of the unique bar code for every voter, and the fact that you can check online to see whether your ballot has been received. Vote-by-mail has worked beautifully in Oregon since its inception, and leads the way for the entire nation.

I believe the proponents of this bill have a single goal: to reduce the number of voters. Voter suppression is the scourge of democracy. Every citizen has the right to be heard. Vote-by-mail gives them that right.

Thank you.