

Submitter: Melissa Hill

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Special Committee On Referendum Petition
2026-302

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1599

Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am submitting firm opposition to SB 1599.

More than 250,000 Oregonians followed the legal process and gathered signatures in a historic timeframe to exercise their right to referendum. They did so across party lines. Republicans, Democrats, Independents, and non-affiliated voters signed. This was not partisan it was civic participation at scale.

And it happened under difficult circumstances.

Last Labor Day weekend, during the special session, Oregonians showed up. Many of us rearranged work schedules, family obligations, and already-thin resources to pay attention and participate. Meanwhile, the Governor did not attend that special session. Then, after delaying action until the last possible moment, the bill was signed in a way that left citizens with very limited time to gather the required signatures.

Despite that compressed timeline, people still showed up. They followed the rules. They did it the right way. They prevailed.

That should have been a clear signal to this Legislature that Oregonians are paying attention and expect to be heard.

Instead, moving forward with SB 1599 in this manner feels like a direct dismissal of the very people who engaged in the process exactly as the law requires. It sends the message that citizens are expected to participate, organize, and follow protocol but that their efforts can still be brushed aside when inconvenient.

That is not acceptable.

Oregonians are already stretched thin. We face some of the highest tax burdens and cost-of-living pressures in the country. Yet people still took time out of their lives to engage in good faith through the referendum process. They did everything right. When that level of lawful civic action is met with what feels like indifference or circumvention, it erodes trust in government at a dangerous pace.

Public service requires listening especially when the response is this large, bipartisan, and organized.

There is also a broader context. Oregon is increasingly under national scrutiny for policies that many residents feel are out of step with public safety, accountability, and fiscal responsibility. When citizens raise concerns and engage through proper channels, the response should be engagement and transparency not escalation or dismissal.

Oregonians matter. Families matter. Communities matter. The people who live, work, pay taxes, and raise children here deserve to know their voices carry weight in this building.

This is not about party. It is about process, respect, and accountability.

When over a quarter-million residents mobilize in a historic timeframe despite obstacles and compressed deadlines, the appropriate response is not to push forward as though that effort did not happen. The appropriate response is to pause, reassess, and listen.

I urge you to stop and reconsider SB 1599 in its current form.
Engage with the people who showed up.
Respect the process they followed.
Remember who government is meant to serve.

Oregonians are paying attention.
And this will not be taken lightly.

Respectfully,
Melissa Hill
Estacada Oregon