

Written Testimony in Opposition to SB 1599

Members of the Committee,

I submit this written testimony in opposition to SB 1599.

Article IV, section 1 of the Oregon Constitution expressly reserves to the people the powers of initiative and referendum. These powers are not granted by the Legislature; they are retained by the people as a direct check on legislative action or inaction. They exist precisely to allow voters to act when the Legislature fails to resolve an issue appropriately or when the public seeks review of a legislative decision.

In this instance, Oregonians have lawfully exercised their constitutional right to refer a matter to the ballot by following the procedures established in statute and the Constitution. SB 1599 intervenes after that process is already underway, altering the timeline in a way that would prevent voters from deciding the issue at the ballot box.

Changing the rules after citizens have complied with them undermines the purpose and integrity of Article IV, section 1. The initiative and referendum process is not a legislative convenience that can be adjusted when politically inconvenient; it is a constitutional reservation of power that must be respected once properly invoked.

Oregon courts have consistently recognized that the initiative and referendum powers are to be liberally construed in favor of voter participation and protected from undue legislative interference. Regardless of one's position on the underlying policy question, altering the process midstream erodes public trust and weakens confidence in Oregon's democratic institutions.

If the Legislature believes a prior decision was flawed, the appropriate remedy is accountability to voters—not procedural changes that deny voters their constitutional role.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to oppose SB 1599 and allow the people of Oregon to vote as guaranteed by the Oregon Constitution.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Joel Hasse

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