

Submitter: Cynthia Mathews

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Special Committee On Referendum Petition
2026-302

Measure, Appointment or
Topic: SB1599

Chair and Members of the Committee,

I respectfully submit this testimony in opposition to SB 1599.

SB 1599 would move a referred measure from the November general election to the May primary election. This change undermines long-standing democratic norms in Oregon and risks limiting voter participation on an issue that should be decided by the broadest possible electorate.

General elections consistently have higher voter turnout and represent a wider cross-section of Oregonians than primary elections. Moving a referendum to a primary election—especially after the referral process is already underway—creates the appearance of manipulating election timing to influence outcomes rather than respecting voter choice. Election rules should not be altered midstream for matters of political convenience.

Oregonians expect fairness, transparency, and consistency in how ballot measures are handled. SB 1599 sets a troubling precedent by allowing the Legislature to shift election dates in response to political pressure, weakening public trust in the referendum process and in state government as a whole.

If a policy enacted by the Legislature is controversial enough to be referred to the voters, it should be decided in the election where the most voters participate and where the outcome best reflects the will of the people.

For these reasons, I urge the committee to oppose SB 1599 and allow the referendum to proceed under the standard, established election timeline.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.

Respectfully,

Cynthia Mathews

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