

Written Testimony on SB 1599

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on SB 1599. My name is Shawn Bergen, and I am an Oregon resident.

Last fall, more than 250,000 Oregonians signed a valid referendum petition to place Governor Kotek's transportation tax and fee increases on the November 2026 ballot. That effort reflected significant public engagement and a clear desire for voters to have a direct say on this issue.

SB 1599 would move that referendum from the November general election to the May election, which historically has much lower voter turnout. This change raises serious concerns about voter access and fairness. Oregon law and long-standing practice recognize November elections as the most representative opportunity for broad public participation.

Regardless of one's position on transportation funding, voters deserve the greatest possible opportunity to be heard—especially on matters involving taxes and fees. Moving the vote to a lower-turnout election risks limiting participation and undermines public confidence in the referendum process.

Oregonians expect their voices to be respected, not diminished by procedural changes. I respectfully urge the committee to carefully consider the impact of SB 1599 on voter participation and to protect the integrity of the referendum process.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Shawn Bergen

Salem, Oregon