

Submitter: ANTHONY BOYER

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Special Committee On Referendum Petition
2026-302

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1599

Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Anthony Boyer, and I respectfully submit this testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 1599.

SB 1599 would move the vote on Referendum Petition 2026-302 from the November 2026 general election to the May 19, 2026 primary election and does so by declaring an emergency. I believe this change is unnecessary, inequitable, and harmful to public trust in Oregon's democratic process.

1. SB 1599 Reduces Voter Participation

General elections consistently produce significantly higher voter turnout than primary elections. Moving a statewide referendum—particularly one involving major transportation taxes and fees—to a May primary means fewer Oregonians will participate in the decision. Important fiscal questions that affect all residents should be decided when the greatest number of voters are engaged, not during a lower-turnout election.

2. The Will of the Voters Is Being Undermined

More than 250,000 Oregonians signed Referendum Petition 2026-302 with the reasonable expectation that the measure would appear on the November 2026 general election ballot. Changing the election date after signatures have been gathered alters the rules mid-process and disregards the intent of those voters who participated in good faith.

3. The Emergency Clause Is Not Justified

SB 1599 declares an emergency in order to take effect immediately. However, moving an election date does not constitute a true emergency related to public health or safety. Using an emergency clause in this context appears designed to limit public engagement and debate rather than to address an urgent, unforeseen crisis.

4. Compressed Timelines Harm Transparency and Fairness

By accelerating the election schedule, SB 1599 shortens the time available for voters, organizations, and advocates to prepare arguments for the voters' pamphlet and to educate the public. This rushed process weakens transparency and reduces the quality of information available to voters making an important statewide decision.

Conclusion

Oregon's referendum process exists to ensure that voters—not lawmakers—have the

final say on major policy decisions. That process works best when participation is maximized, timelines are fair, and rules are not changed after the public has acted. For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to oppose SB 1599 and allow Referendum Petition 2026-302 to remain on the November 2026 general election ballot.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony and for your service to the people of Oregon.

Respectfully submitted,
Anthony Boyer
Forest Grove, Oregon