

Dear Members of the Joint Special Committee on Referendum Petition 2026–302,

We, David and Aneta Hakola, are long-time residents of Dayton, deeply invested in the well-being and democratic integrity of Oregon. We are writing to express our profound concern and unwavering conviction regarding the future of Referendum Petition 2026–302.

Like over a quarter of a million fellow Oregonians, we proudly affixed our signatures to this crucial petition. Our participation, and that of every citizen who signed, was predicated on the clear and explicit understanding that this vital initiative would proceed to a vote on the November 2026 general election ballot. This widespread public endorsement represents far more than just a number; it is a powerful and unified expression of Oregonians' collective will.

It was deeply disappointing to witness the legislative body largely disregard compelling initial testimonies and widespread public concern opposing recent tax increases. We firmly believe that imposing significant gas and payroll tax increases to address ODOT's complex budgetary challenges is not a sustainable or publicly supported solution. This approach places undue financial burden on working families and businesses, while failing to address the underlying issues of fiscal management and accountability that many believe plague the department's operations. The subsequent public outcry is a direct consequence of that oversight, and it highlights a critical disconnect between the legislature and the populace it serves.

An already palpable sense of distrust in Salem's legislative processes risks being further inflamed by decisions perceived as circumventing direct public input. When the democratic process of a citizen referendum, supported by such overwhelming numbers, faces procedural obstacles, it fundamentally undermines faith in governance.

We are keenly aware of the critical discussions within this committee regarding the potential assumption of the ballot drafting process, a role traditionally managed by the Oregon Secretary of State's office. It is precisely at this juncture that your commitment to democratic principles will be most thoroughly tested.

We implore this committee, with the utmost sincerity, to uphold the fundamental democratic principles at stake and ensure Referendum Petition 2026–302 remains precisely where it was always intended: on the November 2026 general election ballot. To deviate from this established path would be a profound disservice to the quarter-million citizens who exercised their constitutional rights. This decision is not merely procedural; it is a profound opportunity to demonstrate genuine respect for the collective voice of **all** Oregon voters, to rebuild essential trust, and to affirm the foundational belief that in Oregon, the people's voice is heard and honored.

I strongly urge you to vote NO on SB 1599.

Thank you for your conscientious consideration of this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

David Hakola