

Submitter: George Shepherd  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Joint Special Committee On Referendum Petition  
2026-302  
Measure, Appointment or  
Topic: SB1599

Testimony in Opposition to SB 1599

?To: Co-Chairs Sen. Kayse Jama and Rep. David Gomberg, and Members of the Joint Special Committee on Referendum Petition 2026-302

From: George Shepherd, Beaverton, Oregon

Date: February 8, 2026

Subject: Public Testimony Against Senate Bill 1599

?Dear Co-Chairs Jama and Gomberg, and Members of the Committee,

?I am a resident of Beaverton writing to express my strong opposition to Senate Bill 1599. Moving the vote on Referendum Petition 2026-302 to the May primary isn't just a procedural shift—it's a move that limits the voices of the very people who will be hurt most by these tax increases.

?The 2025 transportation package includes a gas tax hike, increased registration fees, and a doubled payroll tax. For wealthy Oregonians, these are minor inconveniences. For working-class families and those living on fixed incomes, these are "survival taxes."

?I oppose SB 1599 for the following reasons:

?Financial Hardship on Low-Income Families: Every cent added to the gas tax or taken out of a paycheck via payroll taxes is money taken away from groceries, utilities, and medicine. Working people who have to drive older, less fuel-efficient cars because they can't afford a new EV are being unfairly penalized. We need the full time until November to discuss how these costs will push more Oregonians toward the brink of poverty.

?Voter Suppression of the Working Class: May primary elections historically see lower turnout, particularly among younger and lower-income voters who may not be registered with a major party or have the time to track a mid-year special election. Moving this vote to May feels like a strategy to pass a tax hike while the most impacted people aren't looking.

?Lack of Economic Transparency: Proponents claim this move is about "budgetary certainty," but for a family in Beaverton, the only certainty is that their cost of living is going up. Changing the rules of the referendum process after 200,000 people signed the petition is an insult to every citizen struggling to make ends meet.

?Oregonians deserve the chance to vote on these burdensome taxes during the high-turnout November election. I urge you to vote NO on SB 1599 and respect the financial reality of the people you represent.

?Respectfully,

?George Shepherd  
Beaverton, Oregon