

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

Dear Members of the Committee,

I am writing today to express my strong opposition to SB 1599.

More than 250,000 Oregonians signed the referendum petition with the clear understanding that the vote on the transportation tax and fee increases would take place in November 2026. SB 1599 attempts to move that vote to May 2026, a date with significantly lower voter turnout and far less time for citizens to participate in the process. Changing the election date after voters have already signed the petition is effectively changing the rules midstream, and it undermines public trust in our democratic institutions.

This bill is not an isolated action. It represents the fourth attempt in the past year to limit Oregonians' ability to weigh in on tax and fee increases. During the 2025 Regular Session, tax and fee hikes were negotiated behind closed doors and pushed in the final days of session. When those efforts failed, an emergency session was called in September, during which thousands of Oregonians submitted testimony in opposition, testimony that was largely disregarded. After the legislation passed, the signing of the bill was delayed, reducing the time available for voters to gather signatures for the referendum.

Despite these obstacles, Oregonians responded with an unprecedented level of civic engagement. A quarter-million signatures were collected, one of the largest referendum responses in state history. SB 1599 now seeks to diminish that achievement by reducing voter participation through a date change.

Moving the referendum to May would also shorten the timeframe for citizens to submit arguments to the voters' pamphlet, compress public debate, and limit the ability of voters to fully understand the issue before them. These consequences are predictable and avoidable.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to reject SB 1599 and uphold the integrity of Oregon's democratic process. Oregonians deserve transparency, fairness, and the right to be heard.

Thank you for your consideration.

Colette Conroy