

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

To: Joint Special Committee
Re: Opposition Testimony – SB 1599
Public Hearing Date: February 9, 2026

I am writing to formally oppose SB 1599 and the proposed change to move the election date for the referred measure.

Election timing is not a procedural detail. It is a structural decision that directly impacts voter participation, public awareness, and the legitimacy of outcomes. Moving a referred measure to a lower turnout primary date undermines the spirit of broad democratic participation that referendum processes are intended to protect.

When issues are referred to the people, the expectation is that the widest possible electorate will have the opportunity to weigh in. General elections consistently produce higher turnout, more demographic representation, and greater public engagement than primaries. Shifting a vote of this significance to a primary ballot functionally narrows the electorate and risks producing an outcome that does not reflect the will of the broader voting public.

Whether intentional or not, altering the election date in a way that predictably reduces turnout creates the appearance of process manipulation. Public trust in electoral systems depends not only on fairness, but on the perception of fairness. Decisions that appear to advantage one outcome by limiting participation erode that trust.

Oregonians value accessible, representative elections. If a measure is important enough to be referred to voters statewide, it deserves to be decided in a high participation election where the full electorate is most likely to engage.

For these reasons, I urge the committee to reject SB 1599 and maintain the election timing that best supports robust voter turnout and representative decision making.

Respectfully submitted,
Shantell DeJesus
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