

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

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

I am writing to express my strong opposition to Senate Bill 1599, which seeks to reschedule the election date for Referendum Petition 2026-302 from the November 2026 general election to the May 19, 2026 primary election. As an Oregon resident concerned with fair democratic processes, I believe this bill represents an unwarranted and partisan attempt to manipulate voter turnout and undermine the integrity of the referendum process.

Referendum Petition 2026-302 addresses critical elements of the 2025 transportation funding package (House Bill 3991), including significant tax and fee increases that could impact Oregonians across the state. Over 250,000 signatures were collected to place this measure on the ballot, demonstrating widespread public interest and a clear desire for voters to have their say on these policies. By moving the vote to the primary election—a time when voter participation is historically lower than in general elections—SB 1599 risks disenfranchising a large portion of the electorate. This change could suppress the voices of everyday Oregonians who are more likely to participate in higher-turnout November elections.

Furthermore, the bill's declaration of an emergency to allow immediate effect upon passage appears unjustified. There is no evident crisis that necessitates rushing this procedural change; instead, it seems designed to provide political advantage to one side of the debate. Such maneuvers erode public trust in our legislative institutions and set a dangerous precedent for future ballot measures. Oregon's referendum system is a cornerstone of direct democracy, and altering election dates for strategic reasons threatens that foundation.

I urge you to reject SB 1599 and allow Referendum Petition 2026-302 to proceed on the originally anticipated November ballot. This would ensure a fair, transparent, and inclusive process that respects the will of the people who initiated this referendum. Thank you for considering my views on this important matter. I am available to discuss this further if needed.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Gill