



NORTHWEST HEALTH  
FOUNDATION

March 3, 2021

Chair Smith Warner, Vice Chair Drazan, Vice Chair Holvey and Members of the Committee,

At the Northwest Health Foundation (NWHF) we seek to advance, support and promote health in Oregon and Southwest Washington. We know that much of what drives health and disparities therein stems from choices we make as a society, largely decided by public policies, public practices and public resources. So, the ability for every community member to take part in policymaking—from the ballot box to the legislative chamber—is fundamental to the health of every person.

We also know that we can't end disparities if we don't measure them—whether in healthcare, economic opportunity, education and many other aspects. Democracy is no different. Collecting voluntary data about voters' race, ethnicity and preferred language in the voter registration process helps us ensure our democracy is working for everyone.

HB 2745 is a simple action we can take to make our elections more accessible for every voting Oregonian. As just one example of its potential impact, voters that had previously felt excluded because of language barriers can better receive targeted outreach in their preferred language from staff and volunteers who can answer questions about the voting process, the school levy renewal, candidates for office, and everything else a voter has the right and responsibility to know. This is a huge step in ensuring all voices are heard at the ballot box.

Thomas Jefferson, both a founder of this country and enslaver of Black people, wrote "We in America do not have government by the majority. We have government by the majority who participate." The onus is on our State to make that participation as unencumbered as possible, providing the tools for every Oregonian voter to shape the policies and choose the lawmakers that affect the health of their families and their communities.

Thank you for your time and your service to our great state.

Sincerely,  
Jesse Beason  
President & CEO