

Evelyn Guzman

03/01/2021

RE: Support HB 2745 the Voter Access Act

Dear Chair Smith Warner, Vice Chairs Drazan and Holvey, and committee members,

My name is Evelyn Guzman, I am a Southeast Portland resident. Today I am testifying as both a resident and a Forward Together Action member to express my support for HB 2745, the Voter Access Act.

When I first started doing civic engagement outreach back in 2015, I was inspired by community leaders from grassroots organizations who made sure to talk to college students. It was those leaders who first brought me into organizing by prepping me to be a part of reaching out to community members. I had opportunities to interact with spanish speaking voters in their language because the organization was able to talk to people already within their lists who they knew were spanish speakers. The interactions that I had during that canvass experience was quite frankly an eye opener into what language accessibility and representation can look like. My conversations with individuals were some of the most impactful because many of them had not been reached out to and incorporated into the civic engagement process before, they were always grateful to see me and to be able to ask questions and be spoken to in their language. While doing other canvassing work there were also times in which I would knock on someone's door and there were language barriers. I often think about how great it would be to have the possibility to connect folks to other organizations that can better serve them so that they too can be part of the process.

Through my time at Forward Together I have seen the power of being able to collect self-identified race, gender and sexuality data. We are able to better reach out to folks based on what we are working on and where they fit within the conversation. We also get to connect with folks based on their whole self and have them be better seen and supported which allows us to connect them to partner organizations where they will be supported in the voting process if we don't organize in the language they speak or if they wish to connect on a certain issue.

The ability to collect race, ethnicity, and preferred language matters to me because I can see the positivity this can bring to our communities and to the overall civic participation of our state. Please support and vote yes on HB 2745 because it's a simple action that can make our elections more accessible for every voting Oregonian and can address inequities in voter populations.

Sincerely,

Evelyn Guzman

Forward Together Action

