



NORTHWEST HEALTH
FOUNDATION

March 15, 2021

Chair Wagner and members of the Senate Rules committee,

Northwest Health Foundation (NWHF) seeks 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—choices largely decided by public officials. So, how we choose those public officials, and their reflection of those that live here is fundamental to the health of every person.

We are writing today in support of Senate Bill 791, which would bring Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) to all Oregonians and alter how we choose our representatives.

Our elected bodies should reflect the breadth of diversity and lived experience our state has to offer. The majority do not. Using our current system of plurality to elect candidates is part of the problem. Analysis of jurisdictions adopting RCV has shown that RCV has led to double the number of women holding office, and people of color winning office in proportion to their share of the population. That seems a better fit for democracy than “first past the post.”

But RCV is also about respecting the choices of voters. Can we really say we’ve achieved a more perfect union, a stronger democracy, when the majority of people voted *against* the winner in more than two thirds of 2020 primaries with more than two candidates? In other words, are we really empowering voters when the majority do not agree with the winning candidate? We can do better and RCV offers a path to do so.

RCV is a simple upgrade to how we vote that provides voters with stronger voices and more reflective choices. In passing SB 791, Oregon follows in the footsteps of states like Maine and Alaska, small cities like Payson, Utah and big cities like New York, and of course the many countries like across the world like Ireland and Australia that have used RCV for decades.

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

Sincerely,
Jesse Beason
President & CEO