

March 16, 2021

Chair Wagner, Vice Chair Girod, and members of the committee,

My name is Nadia Hasan, and I am a City Councilor for Beaverton, Oregon. I'm proud to submit testimony today in support of Senate Bill 791, a bill that would **create more equitable access for all Beavertonians in getting their voice heard in our political processes.**

I ran for office the first time for a newly created seat on the Beaverton City Council during the November 2020 election. When I was thinking about running for office in the summer, I asked people I knew what they would think about me running for office. I was told by people to "wait my turn," that Beaverton wasn't ready for a progressive candidate of color to take office, that I didn't have the right experience. Being told to not run for these reasons is one of **the most common shared experiences** for most candidates of color or prospective candidates of color because of our plurality voting system. In addition, running for office takes a substantial amount of money and hours, days and months of a time commitment that are often insurmountable barriers for most candidates who, like me, have other responsibilities like a family and employment.

It is no secret that the plurality voting system forces voters to choose, causing candidates who appear similar (e.g. both being candidates of color, candidates who are progressive, etc.) to the dominant culture and who want to make change, being told to "wait their turn" as to not split the vote. Having good candidates being turned away hurts all of our communities because it reduces the number of candidates who run for office in many races and keeps the overall "bench" of candidates smaller and more homogenous.

As we have seen across the nation, under Ranked Choice Voting (RCV), the cost of running for office, the spoiler effect is much less relevant and the length of races is much shorter. RCV is a simple upgrade to how we vote that provides voters with more choices and includes more voices in our electoral process. It has been adopted by over 10 million voters in the US. It has been implemented **smoothly** across the country from states like Maine and Alaska, from cities like New York and San Francisco to small towns like Payson Vineyard, Utah. It stops forcing us to choose who "can win," allows for a more representative pool of candidates, and guarantees that winning candidates have always received more than half the vote.

While the proposed legislation would not require cities to change their electoral process, I am excited about the infrastructure being built so that our cities can move towards RCV and our communities can be one step closer to a truly reflective democracy.

I want to thank you for your time today. I urge you to vote yes on SB 791 and schedule it for a work session.

Sincerely,

Nadia Hasan

Beaverton City Councilor