



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Testimony in Support for HB 3343

March 30, 2021

Chair Smith Warner, Vice Chairs Drazan and Holvey, and members of the committee,

My name is Khanh Pham, Representative for House District 46. I am excited to testify in support of HB 3343 and the need for bold, meaningful campaign finance reform.

Every single issue and community I care about has been deeply impacted by the role of big money in politics, and Oregon is one of the states where some of the examples of big moneyed interests is the most egregious. And the people know it.

Campaign finance reform is about restoring faith and trust that our lawmakers, and the political candidates who become lawmakers, have the public interest at heart when they tackle the big, complicated issues of our time. And make no mistake about it, these big problems that we're trying to solve are massive. We need to radically transform our economy, how we move around, how we get our energy, and how we get our food, within the next decade if we want to have a decent shot at preserving a livable planet for ourselves. I ran for office to address the climate crisis. I see campaign finance reform as also about climate justice -- the stakes are that high.

This session our legislature has been trying to respond to the many crises facing Oregon -- COVID-19, wildfire recovery, economic recovery, and we need to address another crisis: our democracy and whether people think our government is capable of meeting our needs, or bold enough to at least try. I believe the fundamental question is not whether voters choose to vote Republican or Democrat, **but whether they vote at all**. Not simply whether they support a bill or oppose it, **but whether they believe this democracy is worth participating in, whether their voice matters**. Whether their passion to care is more important or whether their financial ability to write PAC checks is their value to our democracy.

Voters know it too, when more than 78% or 1.76 million Oregonians passed a constitutional amendment to allow for campaign finance limits. It's just as much a signal to Oregonians if we're willing to take on powerful corporate and special interests to legislate for the people who do not have a lobby and cannot afford to buy one.

As a member of the Revenue Committee, I've seen how big moneyed interests control our politics, and how they have successfully avoided paying their fair share to support schools, healthcare, and other social services, and how that kind of defunding over the last few decades **disproportionately impacts communities of color**. It's generally harder for Black, Indigenous, and people of color to get elected in our current unrestricted campaign finance system because we don't have the same networks and access to big donors as white candidates from backgrounds that have historically held power. This has a big deterrent effect on who emerges to

represent us in Salem. Before last year, running for office seemed out of reach to me, because I never saw people who looked like me in elected office.

We know that undue influence from money *rarely* comes in the form of quid pro quo agreements. But what we do know is that money and campaign contributions can distort where current and future candidates spend their time and who they end up talking to.

While campaign finance often most comes into play during election season, it also has its connection to the legislative session. Invariably, moneyed interests know they can go to the legislature, to completely pre-empt or severely weaken legislation, sometimes against the will of the voters. It kills our democracy and undermines community power.

To me, campaign finance reform is about **leveling the playing field**, and the public benefits the most when people see and believe that their voice matters. As a state, I believe it is our role to enfranchise Oregonians, to expand opportunities for residents to shape their communities, to lower barriers for participation in self-government, and to show the people of Oregon that we welcome and encourage their participation in the political process. I urge your support for HB 3343. Thank you.