



March 30, 2021

To: The House Rules Committee

From: Michele Ruffin, Oregon Political Director, Forward Together Action

Re: Support of HB 2680 -1

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

My name is Michele Ruffin and I am the political director of Forward Together Action, a multi-issue organization working with Black, Indigenous, Women of Color and Non-Binary people to push for the systems change we need for all families to thrive. I'm testifying today on behalf of my organization's support for HB 2680, specifically for the -1 amendments presented today.

I'm sure much of the testimony you'll receive today explains the important values behind campaign finance reform and the long-term benefit of having some rules and limitations in place so that big money in politics becomes a thing of the past, so instead, I wanted to share some of what we support about the bill, its impacts, and why.

Forward Together has been organizing for over 31 years, advocating alongside mamas and birthing people for better access to healthcare, demanding a safer future and more resourced communities both here in Oregon and across neighborhoods throughout the US. We began a 501c4 organization because we want every tool in the toolbox available to our communities. We believe that participation in elections matter, particularly when our communities fight for changes we want to see and demand our leaders be accountable to us. We also believe that those elected to represent us should come from the experience of our communities. All that said, we are seeing an increase in people of color and gender non-conforming folks participating in the electoral process more than ever before. Just as with health care access, criminal justice reform, or housing, as we think about policies to put in place related to campaign finance and elections, we must account for what exclusion has looked like and ensure that the impacts of future policy meet the needs of the people, not big corporations or well-funded super PACs that seek to buy elections or candidates.



We support the -1 amendment for the following reasons:

- Staff in-kind support is a critical way that small, emerging organizations led by people of color, like mine, can fully participate in elections. We are often well-connected to our constituencies in communities of color, very aware of the issues impacting our families and are doing the every day civic engagement work to get more people involved. Our staff are often a reflection of, and grown from, our volunteer base or community members, so the staff in-kind support we utilize for elections is a great tool for learning and mobilizing.
- The organizational membership definition in this bill allows for members of the public to both give directly to a candidate and join an organization that reflects their values as they seek more information in an elections race. At times we know members of the public would trust an organization over a politician, so removing barriers to participation in this way is helpful.
- Small donor PACs are a direct reflection of what we see as putting the power in collective hands of the people. It allows for Oregonians to come together and let their voices be heard to support a candidate that is not outweighed by the often overwhelming big money from single donors or SuperPAC's that lead to the frustration and loss of faith in the election process.

Overall, we support the direction of the -1 amendments to HB 2680 and appreciate the sponsor, Rep Rayfield, his staff and other sponsors of the bill for putting this forward.

We urge the committee to pass this bill with the -1 amendment as included.

Sincerely,

Michele Ruffin

Oregon Political Director

Forward Together Action