
Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon

March 30, 2021

Chair Smith Warner, Vice-Chairs Drazan and Holvey, and Members of the House Committee on Rules,

Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon has made access to democracy a top priority. Reproductive freedom and health care are often attacked at the ballot box and unfairly politicized, so we advocate for policies that ensure everyone can engage in our democratic process to defend their bodily autonomy and access to health care. We are writing in support of the policy goals outlined in the -1 amendments to HB 2680.

Civic participation is the bedrock of any democracy. Planned Parenthood PAC of Oregon works hard every election cycle to engage volunteers and supporters in voter education and turnout. These grassroots efforts and mobilization of collective people power help to elect leaders who are representative of our communities; who will defend and expand access to sexual and reproductive health care; and who will work hard to overturn and remedy flawed and discriminatory public policies that impact an individual's ability to be healthy and to thrive.

We value policies that increase the ability for people of color and for middle and working-class Oregonians to participate in our election process and that create accountability among lawmakers to the public—not large corporations or wealthy mega-donors. In its attempts to bring more transparency and accountability while limiting the influence of big money in politics, the -1 amendments to HB 2680 are headed in the right direction.

We support the creation of small donor PACs because they empower the collective efforts of working people and allow their small dollar contributions to have a meaningful impact in races. To that end, we also strongly support the Small Donor 6-1 Match program. Small donor public financing is one of the most powerful, proven solutions available to counter the overwhelming influence of wealth on our political process following the U.S. Supreme Court's Citizens United decision. Small donor PACs combined with a matching public financing option would be one of the most powerful ways to expand grassroots organizing and uplift the voices of everyday Oregonians to influence political change.

In addition to amplifying the impact of small dollar donations, we also value policy that removes barriers to participation and promotes volunteerism with organizations to build stronger communities. A lot of organizations work in communities that may not have a lot of money to contribute, but whose members dedicate and donate their time, which is just as valuable if not more valuable. At times members of the public would rather work with and trust an organization over a politician. The organizational membership included in the -1 allows for members of the public to do both.

Campaign finance reform is a healthy and necessary next step for democracy, but we cannot unintentionally cut out Oregonians who have been the least represented in government. Many small and emerging 501c4 organizations, particularly those led by people of color, are engaged in work every day to advocate on the behalf of the issues impacting marginalized communities and to do civic engagement work to get more of those individuals involved in our democracy. Staff in-kind support is a critical way that these organizations can fully participate in elections. Staff are often a reflection of, and grown from, a volunteer base of community members, so the staff in-kind support that is utilized for direct voter outreach and engagement is an essential component in engaging voters in democracy and a great tool for bringing more diverse voices into the political sphere.

As we get big money out of politics, we also need to acknowledge that we cannot set limits so low that candidates are unable to raise enough resources to compensate campaign staff with fair, living wages and health benefits. Furthermore, a lack of realistic limits and meaningful transparency measures would increase the reliance and dependence on independent expenditure campaigns. Independent expenditure campaigns separate candidates from owning their campaign messages, and too often, independent expenditure campaigns lead to the spread of not only negative and hostile campaigning—but also the spread of false and misleading information in our communities.

Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon opposes the -2 amendments, which both does not include small donor PACs and unduly benefits corporations and wealthy donors over working Oregonians. The -2s do not make our election system more equitable or diverse.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

An Do
Interim Executive Director
Planned Parenthood Advocates of Oregon