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STATE

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

The Elections Division in the Secretary of State Agency is responsible for ensuring secure, fair, efficient, and accessible elections at all levels of the process. One of the top priorities for Secretary Fagan and the Elections Division is expanding accessibility to the ballot, while maintaining the integrity of the elections process. By extending deadlines for receiving and counting ballots, HB 3291-1 would further strengthen the accessibility and transparency of the voting process.

Secretary Fagan spoke with the committee on February 11, 2021 in support of this policy in the form of HB 2687 and we continue this support through HB 3291-1. Our office is grateful for the work Representative Rayfield has been doing on this concept. We've appreciated how closely his office has been working with our team to make sure the implementation of this bill will be workable and ensure the continued security and integrity of our elections process. Having recently received the -1 amendment, our Elections Division is still in the process of reviewing it. Once the review process is complete, we will continue to work with Representative Rayfield on a possible amendment should any implementation issues arise.

Each election cycle, news outlets, counties, and our office estimate an unofficial "last day to mail in your ballot." The messages are confusing, they are often different for each region of the state and can act as a deterrent for people to even submit their ballots. Oregon led the country in voting access with vote by mail and HB 3291-1 would help Oregon catch up to the 14 other states that already allow ballots to be counted if they are mailed on election day. By allowing ballots mailed by election day and received within seven days of the election to be counted, we can ensure more Oregonians' voices are heard in our elections.

This bill would codify a simple, nonpartisan concept—when a voter casts a ballot, it should be counted. This would increase accessibility and equity in elections and would continue to decrease barriers for Oregonians to be civically engaged and to exercise their right to vote. We strongly support this bill and urge the committee to do the same.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tony Lapiz".

Tony Lapiz, Legislative Director

Point of Contact:

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