



April 13, 2021

Chair Smith Warner and members of the House Rules committee,

On behalf of NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon, we would like to respectfully request your support for House Bill 2745, the Voter Access Act (with the -3 amendments), and the language-access bill, House Bill 3021.

NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon considers access to a healthy and representative democracy as one of our most important priorities. Our organization is dedicated to building and sustaining a movement that uses the political process to guarantee every individual the right to make personal decisions regarding the full range of reproductive choices, including preventing unintended pregnancy, raising healthy families, and choosing legal abortion.

Reproductive justice is inherently connected to the ability to have a voice in the democratic process. As an organization that uses the political process to drive necessary systems change, we recognize public policy should be centered on those who are most-impacted by disparities in health care access, disparities in the quality of care received, and the health outcomes that communities experience. In order to elect leaders who will be accountable to the needs of our communities, we need democratic systems that allow everyone to participate.

We also know that Oregon wins when we center those who are most impacted by election results. For example, as a part of the diverse coalition that defeated Measure 106, our coalition made a key decision to poll culturally-specific populations (Latinx voters) and develop community-informed, multilingual campaign messaging and Spanish-language campaign materials that reached 23,000 Latinx Oregonians through mail, digital and radio ads. This, along with a field program run by Forward Together Action that engaged with voters of color at the door, our campaign saw a significant impact in voter turnout and engagement. Contrary to some long-held cultural stereotypes, post-election polling showed that 74% of Latinx voters opposed this measure and voted no on a measure that would have effectively banned access to abortion services for many in our state (outperforming white voters).

NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon has continued to engage Latinx voters in non-election years, running a deep canvassing pilot program that recognized the most impactful way to engage voters about critical issues is to reach out often, listen deeply, hold long-form



conversations, and speak to people in their preferred language. We would like our democratic institutions to do more to meet voters where they are and support the collection of data to better inform these outreach efforts.

Language barriers continue to prove challenging for partners at community-based organizations as they run critical community outreach programs. More than 200,000 Oregonians in our state are considered to have Limited English Proficiency (LEP).¹ According to census data there are languages spoken throughout regions of the state, yet not enough resources are provided to reach voters in the languages they speak in a meaningful way. Providing information about voting only in English disenfranchises thousands of Oregon voters.

The Voter Access Act, also known as HB 2745, would allow voters to voluntarily provide their preferred language, in addition to race and ethnicity. We also see a great advantage to passing HB 3021, which would require the Secretary of State to create and make publicly available a list of five most common languages spoken and ensures state voters' pamphlet and county voters' pamphlet are translated into each of five identified languages and to make translated voters' pamphlets available on county website. These simple next steps will strengthen our democracy and ensure that as a state that's known for knocking down barriers to voting access, we are living up to the values we set around inclusion for all. Ensuring adequate access to language materials in the languages voters understand is a key element of a fair, effective, and responsive election system in Oregon.

HB 2745 and HB 3021 take a step in the right direction by harnessing the power of Oregon's motor voter law to collect data that will allow the SOS and county elections offices across the state to better serve all Oregon voters. We thank you for your support of these important bills.

Sincerely,

Christel Allen
Executive Director
NARAL Pro-Choice Oregon

¹ Oregon 2010 Census Data.