

May 13, 2021

## **Oppose HB 2680, Support Real Campaign Finance Reform**

Chair Smith Warner, members of the House Rules Committee,

Portland Forward is a long time supporter of democracy enhancing good government efforts, including a deep history with campaign finance reform specifically and we urge you to **oppose HB 2680**, including the -1 amendment. Instead we ask you to heed the overwhelming will of Oregon voters and advance systems-changing campaign finance reform for our state in the model of HB 3343 or SB 336.

Portland Forward is an intergenerational group of activists working towards a sustainable, equitable, and just future for our region and as part of that work we have been closely involved in campaign finance reform efforts, including Measure 26-184 which brought campaign contribution limits to Multnomah County offices, Measure 26-200 which brought campaign contribution limits to City of Portland offices, the City of Portland's Open and Accountable Elections – small donor matching program, and most recently Measure 107 which updated Oregon's constitution to explicitly allow for contribution limits.

Through these efforts, we have spoken with tens of thousands of Oregonians about their desires for our state's democracy. And what we have heard from those years' worth of conversations on street corners, at festivals, outside of grocery stores, and in town halls, is that Oregonians want wealthy special interests to play a smaller and less decisive role in our political system. They want a system that doesn't require candidates to raise outrageous sums of money, and want limits to be something they could see themselves contributing to an election they really cared about. In short, the average Oregonian wants their voice to matter, and when our system allows for gargantuan contributions, people rightly feel that their voice doesn't matter.

Bending the hyper-inflating costs of elections down and broadening participation in our democracy are important and popular goals and we have represented these values in all of our campaign finance reform efforts in the Legislature over the last several sessions. We do not see these values reflected in HB2680. Instead, the current versions of 2680 appear crafted specifically to preserve existing power networks and in some cases further expand the influence of narrow groups of Oregon's most powerful political insiders.

The limits in 2680 are far too high, there remain avenues for unlimited contributions, and the types of entities that can make donations is ripe for abuses that have appeared in other states when they bake similar loopholes into their regulations. We strongly support small donor matching programs and their goal to give candidates an alternative to fundraising from special interests, but the program as constituted in 2680 will grant

precious public matching funds to candidates who will still be allowed to take large contributions from special interests, potentially making Oregon's elections even more costly. This creates all of the expenses of a small donor matching program without the benefits to small donors and the public.

In closing, 2680 has started some important conversations, but it is unclear what problem it is trying to solve. The bill as written sets out to do some really important things, but in the end, is not structured to deliver the systemic changes Oregon voters were calling for when they overwhelmingly passed Measure 107.

We have a once in a lifetime opportunity here to design a campaign finance regiment that could broaden participation in our democracy and elevate voices that have struggled to be heard in the past, but HB 2680 does not move us in the right direction and we urge you to instead advance real campaign finance reform in the model of HB 3343 or SB336.

Sincerely,  
James Ofsink  
President, Portland Forward