



February 24th, 2021

Senate Committee on Judiciary and Ballot Measure 110 Implementation
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Testimony in Support of SB 571¹: Restoration of Voting Rights

Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher and members of the committee,

My name is Andrea Valderrama and I am here representing the American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon (ACLU of Oregon). We are a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation and enhancement of civil liberties and civil rights, with more than 28,415 members statewide. We are here today in support of SB 571 in coalition with other advocates here this morning.

The ACLU has defended the voting rights of Black, indigenous, people of color for most of our history, and continues to do so even today². We challenged the “poll tax”—designed to prevent black Americans from voting—decades before a constitutional amendment abolished the practice in 1964, and we have been the primary enforcer of the Voting Rights Act.

We believe that the removal of voting rights is an affront to civil liberties and should not be connected to punishment. We support SB 571 because:

- **Voting is a cornerstone of our democracy, and everyone, especially BIPOC community members, should have the opportunity to vote for elected representatives making decisions about their families and futures.** Poll taxes and literacy tests were among some of the earlier tactics used to prevent African Americans and other BIPOC communities from voting, and taking away this right as additional punishment after time has been served is unjustifiable. Oregon should lead in our commitment of ending this type of voter disenfranchisement.
- **Civic engagement, specifically voting, increases the ability for reintegration, reducing recidivism, and making communities safer.** In the wake of the COVID 19 crisis, we urge you to make it easier for Oregonians to reintegrate back into their communities, not harder. Supporting this bill would provide a clear path towards more successful reintegration.
- **Implementation of this bill is highly feasible.** Oregon leads the nation with vote by mail, automatic voter registration, paid postage, and is the easiest state to vote in.

The ACLU is currently litigating voter suppression and minority vote dilution cases in over a dozen states, from coast to coast, in every region of the country. We are the only civil rights organization committed to defending the voting rights of all Americans, with legislative and litigation capacity in all 50 states.

¹ <https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2021R1/Downloads/MeasureDocument/SB571/Introduced>

² <https://www.aclu.org/news/voting-rights/president-elect-bidens-voting-rights-to-do-list/>



For these reasons, the ACLU of Oregon urges you to support SB 571.

Thank you,

Andrea Valderrama
Policy Director
ACLU of Oregon