



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Testimony in Support for HB 2004

June 20, 2023

Chair Lieber, Vice Chair Knopp, and members of Committee,

My name is Khanh Pham, State Representative for HD 46, representing outer Southeast Portland. I am honored to testify in support of HB 2004, because I believe this will strengthen our Oregon democracy.

I believe our democracy is under incredible, unsustainable stress right now. I fear a fundamental question going forward is not whether voters choose to vote Democrat or Republican or Independent, but whether they even vote at all, and whether their voice even matters in this democratic process when the choices don't reflect their desires. For far too many in our community, voting has become a unsatisfying, uninspiring, and sometimes futile task for voters.

Ranked choice voting can be a simple improvement to our elections that will help ensure more reflective representation for all Oregonians. In this system, voters can better choose their honest favorite. The current pick-one system incentivizes many voters to cast their ballots strategically, picking a candidate they see as *electable* rather than the candidate they like the most—somebody they think *can* win, not somebody they think *should* win. We elected leaders benefit more knowing what our constituents are thinking, whether or not they voted for us.

When communities can better coalesce around their preferred candidates under ranked choice voting, those candidates can worry less vote-splitting or about vague, sometimes problematic notions of "electability. That likely means greater opportunities for more diversity in all its forms – ideology, age, gender, geography, people of color, candidates of different income levels, renters, and minor party candidates to run and earn votes with lower likelihood of spoiling the election to a less-preferred winner.

To be honest, this may shake up the system for political players who are tied to our current system, including incumbents like myself. But this isn't about short-term gains in any one election, it's about taking steps in this moment where so many people are disenchanted with politics, to ensure voters feel like they are actually represented by leaders who reflect their values, it's about restoring people's faith in our democracy.

HB 2004 will create standardized implementation and voter education resources so that all Oregonians have access to a full education about ranked choice voting. It will also assure that our county clerks and election officials have the tools they need to be successful in facilitating this change for the 2028 elections.

Oregon has long been a leader in policies that strengthen democracy and expand election accessibility. I see HB 2004 as Oregon's next step to continue leading the way. I urge your aye vote to send this to the voters.