

RE: Support Guaranteeing the Right to Vote, SB 579
Senate Committee on Judiciary

1/25/2023

Chair Prozanski, Vice Chair Thatcher, and members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary,

My name is Enrique Rivera and I live in Portland. I am writing to testify in strong support for Guaranteeing the Right to Vote, SB 579, which will ensure every eligible Oregonian can register to vote, update their voter registration, and vote in elections based on where they resided prior to incarceration.

The right to vote is enshrined in our constitution and fundamental to a vibrant and participatory democracy. Yet, around 12,000 people in Oregon are currently denied their right to vote, leading to low-income, Black, Indigenous, and Latine people being disproportionately disenfranchised. Guaranteeing the Right to Vote fulfills the promise of our democracy while improving public safety, and addressing racial and socioeconomic inequities.

I support this legislation because as a former adult in custody, decisions about laws that would affect my circumstance and those I was incarcerated with were made with little to no input from us; the affected. I truly believe that it is the responsibility of governing bodies to make decisions based on the input of its citizens regardless of their circumstance. Upon my release, now over 18 years ago I have voted in every election, and take this right seriously. I hope that our citizens who are currently in custody will be able to do the same.

As an Oregonian, I know that connection to community through civic engagement while incarcerated leads to healthier communities, that voting is a civic right and responsibility, and that we can address unjust impacts of mass incarceration.

I am not alone. This legislation is supported by over 40 civil rights organizations, faith-based groups, as well as dozens of currently and formerly incarcerated people. Please ensure that Guaranteeing the Right to Vote, SB 579, is passed out of committee.

Thank you,

Enrique Rivera