

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

Jan 25, 2023

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

My name is Emily Bookstein 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 the disproportionate disenfranchisement of low-income, Black, Indigenous, and Latine people. Guaranteeing the Right to Vote fulfills the promise of our democracy while improving public safety, and addressing racial and socioeconomic inequities.

My strong belief in this bill ties into my value of respecting people's inherent human dignity. I do not believe in a system of punishment that not only treats people as disposable, but also throws away their right to vote. Incarceration is intended to be an inhumane punishment, but why take away even civic participation? Especially when we know that connection to community through civic engagement is a key way to reduce recidivism rates which leads to healthier communities and community well being.

I am not alone in my support for this important bill. 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,
Emily Bookstein