



January 26, 2023

Testimony in support of Guaranteeing the Right to Vote, SB 579

Senate Committee on Judiciary

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

My name is Thien Vo, my pronouns are he/him and I am the Field Organizer at APANO, a culturally specific organization that unites Asians and Pacific Islanders to build power, develop leaders, and advance equity through organizing, advocacy, community development, and cultural work. I submit this testimony on behalf of APANO in alignment with our mission statement of equity. We work to remove barriers to access for communities, and that include those impacted by laws designed to discriminate and silence people of color.

We are part of a broad coalition that has the support of over 40 civil rights organizations and faith-based groups, as well as dozens of currently and formerly incarcerated people. Guaranteeing the Right to Vote, SB 579, 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 is fundamental to a vibrant and participatory democracy. Yet due to biases and inequities in our criminal legal system, roughly 12,000 people in Oregon are currently denied their constitutional right to vote. This unfairly disenfranchises low-income, Black, Indigenous, and Latine Oregonians who are disproportionately incarcerated, creating an unjust, intentional silencing of groups that are already unheard. If we want a system that can support and facilitate transitions for people, we must allow their voices to be heard.

Guaranteeing the Right to Vote fulfills the promise of our democracy while improving public safety and addressing racial and socioeconomic inequities. On behalf of APANO, we ask that you please support SB 579 and pass it out of committee.

Thank you,
Thien Vo (he/him)
Field Organizer
APANO