

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

January 25, 2023

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

My name is Marisol De La Torre, and I live in Albany, OR. I am writing to testify in strong support of 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 before incarceration.

The right to vote is one of the most important civil rights for anyone living in the United States. The disenfranchisement of people incarcerated is an intentional strategy to continue to oppress Black, Indigenous, Latine, and working-class citizens. Racial biases and socioeconomic inequities in our legal system permit Black, Indigenous, Latine, and poor people to be incarcerated at significantly higher rates than White, wealthy Americans. The mass incarceration of people of color has led to high rates of disenfranchisement among these communities. When underrepresented constituencies vote, elected officials can no longer ignore the racial and economic inequities that still affect our communities today. By passing SB 579, we can address the unjust impacts of mass incarceration.

I am proud to live in a state that makes voting so simple and accessible, and that is why I am confident SB 579 can readily be implemented in Oregon. As an Oregonian, I support SB 579 because I recognize that civic engagement, especially from people incarcerated, fosters safer communities. Guaranteeing the Right to Vote fulfills the promise of our democracy, improves public safety, and addresses racial and socioeconomic inequities.

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,

Marisol