

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

1/26/23

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

My name is Connie Wohn and I live in Portland, OR. 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 Latinx people. Guaranteeing the Right to Vote fulfills the promise of our democracy while improving public safety and addressing racial and socioeconomic inequities.

Incarceration is not a just reason to suspend the right to vote as the right to vote is inherent to being a US citizen. By allowing people with felony convictions to vote acknowledges the reality that disenfranchisement disproportionately impacts people of color and thus is inequitable and racist. Those who have served their sentences or completed their penalty for their crimes should be allowed to participate back in society fully and this ability to vote allows people to integrate back into society fully. Voting is a human right.

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,

Connie Wohn