

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

January 28 2023

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

My name is Josh Laurente, and I've lived in Portland for almost a decade. 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.

As a Pacific Islander raised and rooted in the indigenous CHamoru islands of Guam and the Marianas, who are still resisting ongoing colonization by the United States, I know firsthand what it means to be treated as a second-class citizen who's denied the right to vote. If the US really wants to be a beacon for democracy on the world stage, then states like Oregon must lead this nation in guaranteeing the right to vote for all citizens. There can be no second-class status in Oregon, in the occupied territories, or anywhere.

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.

Saina ma'åse and good vibes,
Josh Laurente, MPP