



RE: Support Guaranteeing the Right to Vote, SB 579

Senate Committee on Judiciary

January 27, 2023

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

The Oregon Education Association represents over 41,000 educators and education service professionals across the state, from pre-k to community colleges. Our members are teachers, bus drivers, custodians, teacher assistants, nutrition specialists, community college professionals and more.

We are part of a broad coalition that has the support of over 40 civil rights organizations, faith-based groups, as well as dozens of currently and formerly incarcerated people. I am writing to testify in 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 low-income, Black, Indigenous, and Latine people being disproportionately disenfranchised.

More than 95% of incarcerated people will re-enter society after completing their sentence and work jobs, raise families, and pay taxes in their communities. Making sure Oregonians can vote while incarcerated allows them to feel involved in their communities, and increases the success of reintegration when they come back. Voting also allows incarcerated people to advocate for their children and loved ones who remain in their communities.

For those with children in schools and educators in the family, we want to ensure that every family and every member of the workforce is supported and that we make the conditions such that everyone can thrive.

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

Thank you,

Michele Ruffin

Oregon Education Association