



Isabela Villarreal

RE: Support Expansion of Automatic Voter Registration, HB 2107

February 14th, 2023

Chair Fahey, Vice Chair Breese-Iverson, and members of the committee,

My name is Isabela Villarreal and I am the Policy and Communications Director at Next Up Action Fund. Our mission is to build political power with diverse young people to achieve a more just and equitable Oregon. As an organization that builds political power and strong, effective leadership opportunities for diverse young people, I am here to represent Next Up Action Fund in enthusiastic support for HB 2107, which would expand Automatic Voter Registration to Medicaid.

We have a track record of dismantling structural barriers for more representative democracy and have driven advocacy efforts for election updates resulting in Oregon being one of the easiest states to vote in with over 93% of eligible voters registered. Notably, in 2015, after half a decade of advocacy, we helped pass the nation's first-ever Automatic Voter Registration law. Oregon's AVR system has been nothing less than a qualified success, registering more than half a million new registrants and updating registration records for another million. Yet, eligible Oregon voters are still being left out of AVR.

We believe that expanding AVR will increase youth and broader community engagement in the voting process. Roughly 10% of Oregonians lack a driver's license, and the rate of getting a driver's license is trending down nationally, and a significant portion of that number are young and low-income voters. Right now, 170,000 people who have Medicaid are eligible to vote, but not registered. I think we can all agree that age and income should not disqualify an eligible voter from participating in elections.

By expanding AVR to Medicaid offices, Oregon will close registration gaps, improve the security and accuracy of the voter file, and continue to protect non-citizens.

At Next Up Action Fund, we strongly believe that the backbone of a strong democracy is the ability for everyone to participate in it. This update will ensure that as Oregon's economy and demographic makeup shifts, AVR is offered at the most impactful agencies. I strongly urge you to vote in support of HB 2107 to build the most inclusive democracy we can, and not leave anyone eligible out.

Thank you,

Isabela Villarreal, she/her
Policy and Communications Director