



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Testimony in support of HB 2679

February 21, 2023

Chair Fahey, Vice Chairs Breese Iverson and Kropf, and Members of the committee,

Voting is a sacred right that brings more Oregonians into our civic life, where they express their vision and values, their hopes and ideas for what their community can become. I believe it is in Oregon's interest for more people to participate in our elections, and that voting is an action that should be encouraged and habitual.

The primary elections, both for partisan and non-partisan races, are instrumental in shaping the nominees or run-off options that appear in the November general. For 17 year olds who will be 18 by the general election, it is imperative that they have the *option* to weigh in on the choices that will be presented to them in the general election.

Under our current election rules, many nonpartisan races can be settled in the primary election, without a chance for general election voters to weigh in if an outright majority is won in the primary. Furthermore, depending on where you live, under our current two-party system, sometimes there is no competitive or contested general election -- the choice is within the primary election itself. There is no freedom to vote or freedom to choose in the general election if there is no access to the ballot to shape the choices in the primary election.

HB 2964 is about more than party politics and primaries. It is my belief that those who are most impacted by policy decisions made by their government should have a say in what happens to them. For 17 year olds and young voters, the consequences of our elections and policies will affect their lives for decades to come. Our elected leaders' decisions to tackle the climate crisis, wealth inequality, to protect human health and extend equitable opportunity to all, those choices will reverberate throughout their lives.

Under this bill, for primary elections, only registered voters of a major political party will receive a ballot for candidates of that party. Voters who are not registered in one of the major political parties will receive a ballot containing only nonpartisan contests, such as municipal, county wide, and judicial elections - offices that deeply and materially impact the lives of 17 year old voters this bill would enfranchise.

I urge this committee to support HB 2694. It is in line with Oregon values to increase access to voting and this bill is one important way we can accomplish that. Thank you!