

March 15, 2023

RE: Support Statewide Ranked Choice Voting, HB 2004
House Committee on Rules

Chair Fahey, Vice Chair Breese-Iverson, Vice Chair Kropf, and members of the House Committee on Rules,

My name is Thien Vo. I am a field organizer with APANO, a culturally specific organization that unites Asians and Pacific Islanders to build power, develop leaders, and advance equity through organizing, advocacy, community development, and cultural work.

APANO is thrilled to be part of a broad coalition of over 35 organizations united to pass HB 2004 which will establish ranked choice voting statewide and help ensure all Oregonians are fairly represented in our democracy. Oregon's population of AANHPI communities continues to grow and we must ensure our democracy is reflective of this growth. The leadership of elected officials is connected to the well-being of our communities since elected officials can serve as direct champions of the issues that most affect our communities and ensure our lived experiences are prioritized in policy-making processes.

Currently, we see many candidates of color deciding not to run for office because they are worried they will split the vote among other candidates that share their background or community issues. This dynamic limits the pool of candidates that decide to run for office locally, statewide, and at the federal level and creates a democratic system that is not accessible or viable for many first-time candidates. APANO supports ranked choice voting because of the increased opportunities it creates for candidates of color, first-time candidates, young people, and many others. It reduces the barriers candidates face when running for and being voted into office by encouraging more candidates to run for office and promoting the formation of coalitions that share similar values.

We believe that in order to see better representation of Asian, Pacific Islander, and Native Hawaiian people in office, we must implement proven systems that will deliver on these results. Ranked choice voting has been shown to increase the rates at which women and candidates of color win races — 24% more when compared to non-ranked-choice-voting races. One example of this is the winning victory of Jean Quan who was the first woman and first Asian-American elected as Mayor of Oakland, California under a ranked choice voting election in which Jean Quan was able to successfully align herself with one of the major candidates to share cross-voter support and earn second choice votes.

The bottom line is that ranked choice voting is a simple improvement to our elections that will lead to more reflective elected bodies for Oregonians from every community, including Asian, Pacific Islander, and Native Hawaiian people. On behalf of APANO, we ask that you please support HB 2004 and pass it out of committee.

Thien Vo
He/Him/His
Field Organizer
APANO