

Support Guaranteeing the Right to Vote, SB 579
Ways and Means Roadshow

Members of the committee,

My name is Adam Gregg and I live in Portland. I am here to testify in strong support for funding Guaranteeing the Right to Vote, SB 579.

The right to vote is the foundation of any democracy. Oregon may not have always gotten it right, but we have continued to make progress on enfranchising voters and removing barriers to access this fundamental right. Our vote-by-mail system is the gold standard in US Elections and something we are proud of. I believe it is just another step in our progression to extend this right to all Oregonians, including those who are imprisoned.

I spent almost 6 years in prison here in Oregon, and made many significant changes while there. Inside prison there is a great deal of interest in the system of laws and policies in our state. Personally, I became fascinated with our criminal legal system as well as how state policies impacted me and others that I knew. That has led to the success I have found since my release and the bright future I have today.

For many people in prison, interest in politics and candidates turns into engagement with issues and their community. That engagement is an important step towards people recognizing their value and place within their local community.

I don't think anyone is surprised to hear that our prisons are full of people who are disproportionately poor and minority. Oftentimes prison is a place reserved for people who don't have the resources to thrive. Taking away that right does not make anyone safer and only serves to further isolate people who we should be trying to encourage to be positive members of our society. Our state is better off and our democracy functions better when more voices are heard.

Please ensure that Guaranteeing the Right to Vote, SB 579, is funded and passed out of committee.

Thank you.