

April 25, 2023
Senate Committee Rules
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support for SJR 33/SB 27-1

Good afternoon Chair Lieber, members of the committee:

My name is Alli Sayre and I'm a resident of SE Portland. I'm here today to testify in support of SJR 33/SB 27-1, which will refer to the ballot a measure that would make long overdue amendments to Oregon's constitution repealing the 2004 definition of marriage as being between "one man and one woman" and adding sex, including pregnancy, gender identity, sexual orientation, and gender as classes protected against discrimination.

In 2014, Judge Michael McShane ruled that the present definition of marriage in the Oregon constitution was unconstitutional. At the time, I and hundreds of other Oregonians were in the process of collecting signatures to put a referendum on the ballot repealing this section of the Oregon constitution. Once the ruling came down, the chief petitioners, Basic Rights Oregon, decided to no longer advance the measure. At the time they said, "we are confident that the freedom to marry is secure in Oregon and that we do not need to move forward with the ballot measure".

Having grown up in Ohio, I certainly felt at the time that sentiment was premature. The current hostile backlash, primarily focused on transgender people, is not the first time the LGBTQ+ community has faced intense opposition after making progress in the Gay Agenda, which is mainly to exist in a society free of persecution and violence. I mean who can forget that current Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler was first elected to office taking support of bigots against then-Multnomah County Chair Diane Linn, who courageously led the rest of the MultCo Commission in issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples in 2004. The same year, Oregon passed the constitutional amendment in question, and many other states passed similar bills in a reactionary moment responding to the few places like MultCo where such marriages were legal.

Unfortunately, courageous leaders like Diane Linn are few and far between and even where they exist, we cannot count on the Diane Linns of the world to be enough to protect us from tyrannical government intrusion into our private lives. Reactionary bigots have captured our courts at every level and are uninterested in following judicial precedent. Oregon is not immune from the problem of reactionaries getting elected—look at the current makeup of the Portland City Council. Passing this resolution will allow us to finally right this 20-year wrong and protect our community into the future. It's time to live up to our values and protect the most vulnerable among us. The idea of us going backward to my youth and young adulthood, where it was physically dangerous to be out, is unfortunately no longer far-fetched. Thank you for your time.