



May 3, 2023

To: Joint Ways and Means Committee

RE: Youth Voice Youth Vote Participatory Budgeting \$1.2 million funding request.

Dear Co-Chair Steiner, Co-Chair Sanchez and members of the Joint Ways and Means Committee,

My name is Blanca Gaytan Farfan and I am the Policy and Communications Director at Participatory Budgeting Oregon. We work for more participatory and just public budgeting for all Oregonians by centering the expertise and leadership of underrepresented communities. Our ask is for the Joint Ways and Means Committee to invest in youth by allocating \$1.2 million dollars for a second cycle of Youth Voice Youth Vote Participatory Budgeting.

Youth Voice Youth Vote engages youth and young adults in Senate Districts 24 and 25 to amplify their voices and votes in decision making on public investments in their communities. We have been working closely with 22 youth leaders who have led the design and execution of this project. More than 1,000 youth have participated by learning about Participatory Budgeting, contributing their ideas on what their communities need, and shaping those ideas into feasible projects that will be voted on in the upcoming weeks. Youth have invested countless hours into this participatory budgeting process because they see how for the first time they are being taken seriously and how their knowledge and lived experiences can help shape solutions to improve their communities.

Funding a second cycle of Youth Voice Youth Vote demonstrates continued commitment to equity, shared decision making with community, and investment in youth leadership. Young people have enormous untapped collective knowledge and expertise that can and should inform and direct the public investments made on their behalf. As electeds, you will gain greater insight from constituents on the problems impacting them. Youth historically are missed in traditional civic participation spaces and this is an opportunity to strengthen our democracy and show that as a state we value youth voice.

Once again, I urge the Joint Ways and Means Committee to invest in youth and allocate \$1.2 million dollars for a second cycle of Youth Voice Youth Vote.