

Submitter: Luhui Whitebear
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB224
Copy of testimony delivered live:

Good afternoon Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Bonham and members of the committee.

My name is Luhui Whitebear. I serve as chair of the Corvallis School Board, Region 10 (Linn, Benton, Lincoln) representative on the Oregon School Board Association board of directors, and the president of the Oregon School Board Member of Color Caucus. I am here today to strongly support Senate Bill 224, which prevents residential addresses of candidate's principal committees from being published on the Secretary of State System.

I have been advocating for several years about candidate safety that is compromised by public disclosure of residential addresses. When I first ran for our school board in 2021, I had to make the difficult choice of whether or not I should run due to another community member stalking me at work and online. Unfortunately this person skirted right under the line to qualify me for the protection of a stalking order through the recommended legal systems. I had to think of not only myself, but my children, especially as a single parent. And I am not alone in this type of decision making happening when people decide whether or not to run for public office.

Luckily for me, in this situation, this person did not show up at my home, at least not to my knowledge. Over the years, I have learned that people have had their homes vandalized, hate notes left, and persistent stalking with love notes left at their homes. And these are just a couple of examples.

In past advocacy, I have been told that we should know what comes with public office service, including these types of actions. However, I do not think that harassment and home vandalism should be a right of passage in order to serve our communities in elected positions. This harassment impacts not only candidates and electeds, but also our families, roommates, and neighbors. SB 224 is a huge step in moving towards better candidate safety while we continue to explore what other steps are necessary in other systems where candidate information may be accessible. Better protections will encourage more participation in public office service, which is ultimately better for the future of public office service. Ensuring all systems are in alignment across the state will take much effort, and Senate Bill 224 is a part of these efforts. I urge you to support SB 224 to help protect those who want to serve the public through elected office and those who are part of their campaign committees. Thank you for your time.