



March 27, 2025

House Committee on Rules  
Oregon State Legislature  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, OR 97301

**RE: Testimony in Support of House Bill 3687**

Dear Chair Bowman, Vice-Chairs Drazen and Pham, and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon (ACLU of Oregon). The ACLU of Oregon is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving and enhancing civil liberties and civil rights, with more than 44,000 supporters statewide. **We support House Bill 3687, which would protect direct democracy in Oregon by ensuring a simple majority is the threshold for amending a city or county charter.**

A **simple majority requirement means 50% + 1 of the voters must approve** an amendment to a city or county charter submitted for their approval.

- This is in **contrast to a supermajority requirement, which typically requires 60% of the voters to approve** of a proposed amendment.

State constitutional amendments and other ballot initiatives submitted to the voters face a simple majority threshold.

- In fact, **Article II, Section 23 of the State constitution requires that any state law that changes the voter threshold for an initiative or other measure submitted to the people must pass by the threshold it would establish going forward.**
  - Article II, Section 23 expressly states that “[t]he purpose of this section is to prevent greater-than-majority voting requirements from being imposed by only a majority of the voters.”
- It only makes sense that **the same simple majority protections should apply to city or county charter amendments**
- So long as state law permits supermajority requirements, a simple majority of voters could approve a series of city or county charter amendments and then pass a supermajority requirement for any future amendments
  - Consequently, when that narrow majority loses power and the new majority seeks to reform some of what was done, it will be bound to a supermajority requirement imposed by a simple majority of voters
- This **bill would prevent the use of these kinds of anti-democratic tactics and safeguard direct democracy**; promoting civic participation and the general welfare

As a testament to Oregon’s democratic traditions, **nearly all of Oregon’s cities and counties utilize a simple majority requirement for amendments to their charters.**

- In the last election, Gresham voters overwhelmingly voted to approve Measure 26-255, with 73% of the vote.<sup>1</sup>
- This measure amended the city's charter to **no longer require a supermajority of voters to pass future amendments** and instead established a simple majority threshold like almost every other jurisdiction in Oregon.
- This illustrates how HB 3687 would simply enshrine existing local democratic practices in state law by protecting local ballot measure processes from future manipulation.

**HB 3687 provides this body with an opportunity to enhance Oregon's democracy and promote a government for the people, of the people, and by the people. The ACLU of Oregon urges your support for HB 3687 and asks that you please pass it out of committee.**

Respectfully,

**Michael Abrams**, Policy Counsel  
ACLU of Oregon

If you have any questions or requests for clarifications, please email Jessica Maravilla, Policy Director, at [jmaravilla@aclu-or.org](mailto:jmaravilla@aclu-or.org)

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<sup>1</sup> "Multnomah County Election Results - Update #10, November 5, 2024 General Election." *Multnomah County*, 20 Nov., 2024, [multco.us/file/2024-11\\_report\\_10.pdf/download](https://multco.us/file/2024-11_report_10.pdf/download).