Submitter: Vanessa Schuster

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Rules

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB210

Committee members,

SB 210 is a blatant attempt to disenfranchise voters and dismantle a system that has made Oregon a leader in accessible, secure elections. Oregon's vote-by-mail system has set the standard for the nation, proving that when voting is made easier, democracy thrives. Since its introduction in 1981 and the state's transition to an all-mail system in 2000, we've seen a marked increase in voter turnout. States with robust vote-by-mail policies consistently see higher participation rates. In the 2022 primaries, states that automatically mailed ballots to voters, like Oregon, had an average turnout of 30%, compared to just 18% in states requiring an excuse to vote absentee. In the 2020 presidential election, 43% of ballots nationwide were cast by mail, up from 25.6% in 2018, demonstrating a growing reliance on this secure and convenient method of voting.

SB 210 would strip away this proven system by forcing voters to justify their need for a mail-in ballot, an unnecessary and restrictive measure that places undue burdens on the elderly, disabled, working-class voters, and those in rural areas. According to Political Science Quarterly, strict voting requirements disproportionately suppress turnout among minority and low-income voters. The Journal of Empirical Legal Studies has shown that bureaucratic obstacles in obtaining government-issued IDs further disenfranchise these communities. Meanwhile, court cases—such as those in Texas—have already demonstrated that similar policies disproportionately burden voters of color (Brennan Center for Justice).

This bill is not about election integrity—it is about erecting barriers that make it harder for Oregonians to vote. We must reject SB 210 and protect our vote-by-mail system, ensuring that every eligible voter can cast their ballot freely and without unnecessary obstacles. Vote NO on SB 210—defend democracy and keep voting accessible for all.