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On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Rules

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB210

In our country, every citizen has the right and the freedom to vote, to decide how they want governance to be. If we truly value that freedom, then we should seek to increase voter turnout at all times. The purpose of absentee voting/vote-by-mail has always been to increase voter turnout, and it works. Therefore, voting by mail is beneficial to our democracy.

I understand that legislators may be afraid of voter fraud and think that absentee voting or "Vote By Mail" (VBM) makes it easier for bad actors to participate in voter fraud. However, after the VBM system was implemented in Oregon in the 1980s, Oregon has never had a significant problem with voter fraud. According to the MIT Election Data & Science Lab, voter fraud of any kind is extremely rare, with two of the best-known cases of voter fraud involving absentee voting occurring all the way back in 1997 in Georgia and Miami.

My final point is the steep cost of changing a system so radically. Oregon's VBM system has been in place for 40 years. If repealed, official in-person voting locations would need to be vetted and re-selected and reserved, voting machines would need to be purchased and coded, security would need to be hired and trained, a vastly bloated number of clerical, support, and administrative staff would need to be hired and trained and provided with physical spaces, and the voting populace would need to be informed over and over and over again of the new system, upon which millions of them would request absentee ballots, flooding the system with requests and wasting more resources. This would NOT be a popular decision; in fact, I predict it would be hated, as would those who implemented it.

A farmer who works dawn to dusk, or a single mom covering three jobs, or a beloved grandfather in assisted living, are all valuable citizens who deserve to have a voice in our democracy. VBM ensures they can vote on their own time, and don't have to waste time, money, and energy taking a day off and driving to their nearest voting location (which may be a half hour away or more). For some people (like the grandfather), this can even be dangerous. Furthermore, distributing ballots by mail is much more efficient. Voters do not have to wait in line for hours and be turned away at the end of the day. To repeal Vote-By-Mail in Oregon will waste millions of dollars in government resources, lower voter turnout, deprive voters of their voice, and incite chaos at voting locations that haven't been used as such since the 1980s. It is a Bad Idea.