

Submitter: Amanda Lang
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB210
Opposition for Restrictive Voting Laws

Dear Senate Committee On Rules,

When people are thinking about structuring voter rights laws, they should be thinking about every citizen, not just those who are affluent or who have means. If Oregon legislatures move forward with this proposal, they will effectively disenfranchise elderly voters, rural voters, disabled votes, military voters, and unhoused voters.

I work in a homeless shelter, and I see firsthand how restrictive voting laws—that make the process more complex and burdensome—disproportionately affect people experiencing homelessness. Mail-in ballots help by eliminating the need to find transportation to polling locations, and by relieving time constraints for people with jobs who have to hurry back to night shelters to make 5 p.m. sign-in deadlines. Currently in Oregon, people without home addresses or reliable mail service can often receive ballots at locations they frequent, like shelters and food banks.

People experiencing homelessness feel the impact of our housing policies most acutely. Too often, however, they face barriers to casting their ballots and making their voices heard in the democratic process. More inclusive election policies, such as vote-by-mail, empower individuals to advocate for their rights and create a more inclusive democracy, where all people in our community, those housed and unhoused, have a stake in the decisions that impact their lives. Our policies are stronger when they are shaped by directly impacted communities and elected leaders who represent their interests. Making in-person voting the standard—in other words, making voting less accessible for vulnerable populations—would be moving backwards as a society.

Thank you,
Amanda Lang