

To: Senate Committee on Rules
From: CM Hall, Newport
Re: Opposition of SB210 (Repealing Vote-at-Home)

Greetings, Senators! Thank you for taking the time to read my remarks.

My name is CM Hall and I'm a lifelong Oregonian, and a Newport City Councilor. I'm also a nationally-certified sign language interpreter. My specialty is working with DeafBlind individuals.

I am testifying in opposition to Senate Bill 210 as it makes voting in-person inaccessible for people with disabilities and rural voters as well as puts a huge strain on human resources in rural communities who are stretched thin.

Quick story: As a volunteer in the DeafBlind community, in 2008, I assisted my friend Wayne with his ballot in the May primary in Oregon. Wayne was born hearing and sighted but had had an accident as a boy that made it so he could not produce signs but could read fingerspelling and then would verbally complete the word or sentence. He also could not flex his fingers to read Braille. When I sat down to go through the Voter's Pamphlet and ballot so he could vote, it meant **every letter of every word** had to be painstakingly fingerspelled into his hand. And it took 4 hours for him to complete the ballot. I volunteered my time to do this because I value the importance of every vote. Voting at home is critical for allowing people with disabilities, older adults, people caring for others, people with work and school commitments, etc. to be able to vote on their own time and pace when they can.

And while SB210 allows for this an accommodation provision for people with disabilities, it does not take into account that voting in person demands an extraordinary amount of human resources - much of which are volunteer-powered. In rural communities like where I live, that presents more challenges to operationalize. Voting in person would be taking us back in time - literally to the 1900's - and making it more costly when not everyone has the privilege or time to engage in that way. And this bill dismisses the consequential resulting high voter turnout since vote-by-mail became law, allowing for a larger window of time to review and cast the ballot.

This bill strips Oregonians of the freedom to make educated and informed decisions on their own schedule. I urge you to vote No on Senate Bill 210. Thank you.

(If time)

Lastly, we all as sighted folks, are inundated with presidential campaigns and know who is running months and years before we ever cast our vote these days. When I sat down with my friend Wayne, he was getting that information for the first time - that "Bill Clinton's wife?" was running for President... that a "Black man named Barack Obama" was running for President. That was news to him as he was sitting there to vote. It was admittedly sad to know he hadn't been informed prior to that - no one had taken the time to fingerspell the current news and events into his hand.