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On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Rules  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB210

Testimony in Opposition to Legislative Proposal SB 210/Makes in-person voting on the date of an election the standard method for conducting an election.

Presented to the Senate Committee on Rules

By Loren Kelley

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Chair Senator Kayse Jama, Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I stand in strong opposition to SB-210, which seeks to replace Oregon's proven vote-by-mail system with in-person voting as the standard method. This proposal risks dismantling a model of electoral integrity, accessibility, and efficiency that has served Oregonians for over two decades. Here's why:

### 1. Oregon's Vote-by-Mail System is a National Success Story

Since its adoption in 1998 (via Senate Bill 258), Oregon's vote-by-mail system has consistently delivered record-breaking voter turnout, regularly ranking among the highest in the nation. In 2020, 78% of eligible Oregonians voted—a testament to the system's accessibility. Reversing this progress would alienate voters who rely on its convenience, particularly working families, seniors, and rural residents.

### 2. Accessibility is a Cornerstone of Democracy

In-person voting creates unnecessary barriers:

Disabled and elderly voters may face challenges traveling to polling places.

Rural communities often lack adequate polling infrastructure, forcing long drives in areas with limited public transit.

Low-income workers cannot always take unpaid time off to wait in lines.

Vote-by-mail ensures equitable access, allowing voters to research candidates and return ballots securely at their convenience.

### 3. In-Person Voting Threatens Voter Participation

Studies, including a 2020 Stanford University analysis, confirm that vote-by-mail boosts participation by 2–5%, with the largest increases among younger voters and communities of color. Forcing Oregonians to vote in person would disproportionately silence these groups, undermining our commitment to inclusive democracy.

#### 4. Fiscal Responsibility

Oregon's system saves taxpayers millions annually. Transitioning to in-person voting would require costly investments in polling places, equipment, and staffing. These funds would be better allocated to education, healthcare, or improving existing election security.

#### 5. Security and Trust

Oregon's system includes rigorous safeguards: signature verification, ballot tracking, and secure drop boxes. The Secretary of State's office reports no evidence of widespread fraud. Conversely, in-person voting introduces risks like machine malfunctions or voter intimidation—issues that erode trust.

#### 6. Resilience in Crises

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the fragility of in-person voting. Oregon's system allowed elections to proceed safely and smoothly, avoiding the chaos seen in states that scrambled to expand mail voting. Climate disasters and public health emergencies further underscore the need for a resilient system.

#### Conclusion

Oregon's vote-by-mail system is not just a policy—it's a value. It reflects our belief that democracy works best when every voice can be heard without barriers. This proposal is a step backward, one that would disenfranchise vulnerable Oregonians and discard a model other states strive to emulate.

I urge you to reject SB-210 and preserve Oregon's legacy as a pioneer in accessible, secure, and participatory democracy.

Respectfully submitted,

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