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

Access to vote in elections and have a say in the policies that govern our lives is a fundamental right of a democracy. I repeat, a right. Not a privilege. It is therefore incumbent upon anyone looking to restrict the free exercise of that right to fully justify the necessity for the restriction. And I stand on principle against a bill like SB 210 that does not even pretend to justify its drastic restrictions to my rights.

But since the burden of proof has been reversed, I will humor the course of the discussion with an explanation of what SB 210 will cost us voters.

If an election is a right afforded to all taxpayers, then an effective election strategy would see an extremely high number of register voters and equally high voter participation year over year. Because Oregon's voting strategy today is built with the assumption of vote-by-mail first with minimal required documentation, Oregon is one of the few states that allow and encourage voter registration with a license acquisition or renewal. This has directly led to over 90% of the eligible voter population to register almost automatically. A feat only achieved by 8 other states. And with a vote-by-mail first strategy, Oregon has also effectively converted every mailbox into a person voting booth for a fraction of the price required by other states who require large facilities for in-person voting. Not to mention the lines. I have participated in elections for over a decade now, and have proudly never waited in a single line to do so. This accessible voting method has made Oregon one of the most consistently over-performing states when it comes to voter turnout. Oregon has averaged an 82.26% voter turnout on election years since 1998, which over 20% the national average. And during midterm years, when turnout traditionally drops off, Oregon performs even better, with over 25% above the national average.

Doing away with that for in-person voting would mean effectively fewer voting sites, less time to cast a ballot, additional burden on voters who now cannot vote from the convenience of their own home, and produce long wait times. If you'll afford me a point of comparison with South Carolina, a state which does not do vote-by-mail, as illustration. In 2020, over 2.5 million voters waited in lines to vote an average of 34.1 minutes each. Which means a collective 165 years of the state's population was stolen from the residence by avoidable line-waiting. And rather than learning from that lesson, SB 210 would sign Oregonians up for the same fate.

Moreover, it is made explicit in this bill that the shorter voting period, fewer voting sites, and longer lines (as if not enough reason to vote no) will also come at great expense to the Oregonian taxpayers who will have to build or rent a significant

number of voting location that were thus far avoided thanks to the vote-by-mail first strategy. We simply do not have the infrastructure nor the expertise to effectuate an exclusively in-person vote and to demand it would hurt every taxpayer and result in less of their voices heard through vote.

It is for this reason, the most important of many that could not fit into a reduced character limit, I find this proposed bill unsanctionable. I urge the committee to reject this proposed bill outright. And I will be demanding an even more thorough justification than provided here from any member who finds a drastic reduction in the rights of Oregon voters acceptable.