

February 10, 2026

Testimony in Strong Opposition to SB 1599

Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Meichelle Squire, and I am an Oregon resident. I submit this testimony in **firm opposition to SB 1599**.

More than 250,000 Oregonians lawfully exercised their constitutional right to referendum so that voters—not politicians—could decide on significant transportation tax and fee increases advanced under Governor Tina Kotek. SB 1599 represents an alarming attempt to interfere with that process by moving this referendum from a high-turnout November general election to a historically low-turnout May election.

Let's be clear...this is not an administrative adjustment. It is a political maneuver that undermines public trust and weakens voter participation.

The referendum process exists as a direct check on legislative power. When hundreds of thousands of citizens follow the rules, gather signatures, and qualify a measure for the ballot, the Legislature's responsibility is to respect that process—not to alter the timing in a way that predictably reduces voter engagement. Changing the election date after Oregonians have already acted gives the appearance that the rules are being shifted to influence the outcome rather than uphold democratic principles.

November elections consistently produce the broadest representation of Oregon's electorate. A decision about major, long-term tax and fee increases should be made when the greatest number of Oregonians are participating, not during an off-cycle election when fewer voices are heard. Anything less diminishes the legitimacy of the result.

Whether one supports or opposes the underlying tax policy is not the issue before you today. The issue is whether the Legislature will honor the integrity of Oregon's referendum system or set a precedent that citizen-driven measures can be procedurally reshaped when politically inconvenient.

Oregonians deserve a fair vote, a transparent process, and a government that respects the will of the people, not one that appears to sidestep it.

I respectfully urge the Oregon Senate and the 83rd Oregon Legislative Assembly to vote **NO on SB 1599** and allow this referendum to remain on the November ballot, where voter participation is highest and democratic legitimacy is strongest.

Respectfully,
Meichelle Squire
Marcola, OR