

Submitter: Joshua Fair
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Special Committee On Referendum Petition
2026-302
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1599

To the Joint Special Committee on Referendum Petition 2026-302,
Oregon Legislative Assembly

My name is Joshua Fair, and I am a registered voter in Oregon. I am submitting this written testimony in opposition to Senate Bill 1599, which would move the election date for Referendum Petition 2026-302 from the November general election to the May 19, 2026 primary election.

I was one of the over 250,000 Oregonians who signed that petition to refer the transportation tax law passed in 2025 to the people for a vote.

I oppose SB 1599 for several key reasons:

1. It undermines the democratic intent of the referendum process.

When citizens gather signatures to refer a law to the ballot, the implicit expectation is that the decision will be made at a high turnout election — namely, the November general election. Holding the vote in May, a low-turnout primary, effectively dilutes the voice of the people who worked to qualify the referendum.

2. It threatens equitable voter participation.

Voter turnout in primary elections is historically much lower than in general elections. Moving the vote to May means fewer voters decide on a major tax policy, which is unfair given the broad public impact of the underlying transportation tax and fee increases.

3. It cripples the public's ability to participate in the voters' pamphlet process.

Because signatures for ballot pamphlet arguments must be gathered well in advance (and many still must be collected), a May election compresses the timeline severely. That puts citizens and grassroots campaigns at a disadvantage compared to well-funded interests, limiting meaningful engagement.

4. It appears designed to engineer a political outcome, not serve Oregonians.

The timing of SB 1599's introduction and its emergency clause — which would make the bill effective immediately on passage — raise serious concerns about process over principle. Many Oregonians see this as an attempt to circumvent broad participation on a matter of statewide taxation and transportation funding.

For all of these reasons, I urge the committee to reject SB 1599 and allow

Referendum Petition 2026-302 to be placed on the November general election ballot, where the highest number of Oregonians can participate in this fundamental civic decision.

Thank you for your consideration.

Signed,

Joshua Benjamin Fair

Lebanon, Or