

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

Written Testimony in Opposition to Senate Bill 1599

Submitted to: Joint Special Committee on Referendum Petition 2026-302

Date: February 11, 2026

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Michael Dunn, a registered voter and resident of Gold Beach, Oregon (@modocmike on X). I strongly oppose Senate Bill 1599, which seeks to move Referendum Petition 2026-302 from the certified November 3, 2026 general election to the May 19, 2026 primary.

This referendum, backed by over 250,000 Oregonians who signed petitions in record time, challenges burdensome transportation tax and fee increases from the 2025 special session (Chapter 1, Oregon Laws 2025)—including a 6-cent-per-gallon gas tax hike, elevated vehicle registration and titling fees, and a doubled payroll tax for public transit. The Secretary of State verified signatures and confirmed the November ballot placement.

SB 1599 should be rejected for these reasons:

It suppresses voter turnout and access. General elections see dramatically higher participation (often 20–40% more than primaries). Shifting to May would disenfranchise many voters, particularly independents, working families, and those in rural areas like Curry County who vote mainly in November.

It undermines the constitutional referendum process. Over 250,000 citizens exercised their Article IV, Section 1 rights to refer this measure. Changing the date post-certification overrides that choice, erodes trust, and sets a dangerous precedent for future citizen initiatives.

No genuine emergency or necessity exists. Claims of needing earlier budget clarity do not justify overriding the certified election date. November provides ample time for preparation, voter education, and fair debate.

Rural Oregonians would be disproportionately harmed. In coastal and rural communities, primary turnout is lower due to logistical barriers. We already bear high transportation costs—moving the vote silences our voices on policies that directly impact us.

With thousands of Oregonians (over 4,000 written testimonies, overwhelmingly opposed) urging rejection, SB 1599 appears to prioritize political expediency over inclusive democracy. Honor the will of the people who qualified this referendum for November.

I respectfully request a DO NOT PASS recommendation on SB 1599.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Michael Dunn
Gold Beach, OR 97444