

Submitter: Wendy Burling

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Special Committee On Referendum Petition
2026-302

Measure, Appointment or
Topic: SB1599

Dear Oregon Legislators,

I am in strong opposition to Senate Bill 1599. This bill represents a blatant attempt to manipulate the electoral process for political gain, disenfranchising hundreds of thousands of Oregon voters. Referendum Petition 2026-302 successfully gathered over 250,000 signatures from

Oregonians to challenge key provisions of the transportation funding bill passed in the 2025 special session, including new taxes and fees on gas and vehicles. These signatures reflect widespread public concern about the financial burden on working families, small businesses, and rural communities already struggling with rising costs. By changing the vote to the primary election in May, where voter turnout is historically much lower, SB 1599 deliberately reduces

the number of voices heard on this critical issue. This is a strategic maneuver acknowledged by Democratic leadership to improve the bill's chances of survival by limiting participation. Tactics such as these set a dangerous precedent. If lawmakers can change election dates for referendums that threaten their policies, what stops future legislatures from doing the same for other citizen-initiated measures? This bill undermines the spirit of Oregon's referendum process, which is designed to give the people a direct say in government actions. Moving the vote denies the full electorate, including independents, young voters, and those who engage more in general elections, the opportunity to weigh in on policies that directly impact their wallets and daily lives. Furthermore, declaring an "emergency" to make the bill effective immediately is

unjustified and appears to be a ploy to rush through changes without adequate public debate. The original referendum was set for November precisely because it aligns with higher voter engagement, ensuring a more representative outcome. I urge you to reject SB 1599 and respect the will of the over 250,000 Oregonians who signed the petition. Let the people decide in November, as intended. Anything less is an affront to transparency and fair governance.