

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

Good afternoon, co chair Jama & Gomberg, and members of the committee. I come before you today in strong opposition to this bill. We are discussing more than just a date on a calendar; we are discussing the integrity of the democratic process in Oregon.

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When over 250,000 Oregonians signed this petition, they did so with a specific understanding: that their voices would be heard on the November 2026 ballot. Moving this vote to May is not a simple administrative shift—it is a disservice to those voters. It is a well-documented fact that May primaries suffer from significantly lower turnout. Shifting this measure to a low-turnout election effectively silences a quarter of a million citizens who expect a full, representative vote.

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Furthermore, we must address the glaring lack of neutrality in the voter pamphlet process. Currently, the explanation is being shaped by those who oppose the petition, rather than those who led the drive. This creates an inherent conflict of interest. How can we claim to provide 'voter education' when the very people trying to defeat the petition drive are the ones holding the pen?

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Finally, we must look at the precedent this sets. If SB 1599 moves forward, will everyday Oregonians still have the grassroots opportunity to include a statement in the voter pamphlet through signature collection? Or are we moving toward a 'pay-to-play' system where a \$1,200 fee is the only way to be heard? Our democracy should not have a cover charge.

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This feels less like public service and more like a political game—but these are our lives. Our daily reality is impacted by these decisions. I urge you to vote 'No.' Do not add hurdles to the democratic process. Let Oregonians speak with a clear, loud, and unimpeded voice.