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COMMITTEES:

HOUSING, VICE-CHAIR
JOINT WAYS AND MEANS
NATURAL RESOURCES SUB

February 11, 2026

Co-Chairs and Members of the Joint Special Committee on Referendum Petition 2026-302,

I submit this testimony in strong opposition to **Senate Bill 1599**, which would move the vote on Referendum Petition 2026-302 from the November 2026 general election to the May 19, 2026 primary.

More than **250,000 Oregonians** — including thousands in my rural House District 59 — collected signatures in good faith, relying on the explicit promise that their referendum on the \$4.3 billion transportation tax-and-fee package would appear on the **highest-turnout November ballot**. That process was completed, verified, and certified for November. Changing the date now is a direct override of the people's clearly expressed intent.

This is not about budget certainty for ODOT; it is a post-qualification attempt to reduce voter participation in a lower-turnout primary election. Oregonians already face crushing fuel and vehicle costs in rural communities where driving long distances is a necessity, not a choice. Suppressing turnout on this issue only compounds the hardship and erodes public trust in our democratic institutions.

The initiative and referendum process is a core constitutional right in Oregon. When citizens meet every legal requirement — as they did here — the Legislature should not retroactively alter the rules to achieve a preferred political outcome. The testimony before this committee has been overwhelming: **99% oppose SB 1599**. Ignoring that voice would be a grave mistake.

I urge the committee to **reject SB 1599** and preserve the referendum on the November 2026 ballot, where the fullest expression of the people's will can be heard.

Sincerely,

Rep. Vikki Breese-Iverson
House District 59