

To: House Rules Committee
Re: Small Donor Elections
Date: February 8, 2018

Chair Williamson and fellow committee members,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Fabiola Casas, and I am here to testify in support of the passage of a Small Donor Elections reform in Oregon.

As an Oregon Portland Public Schools employee and mother, I am committed to playing an active role in creating more representative, accessible and fair leadership at all levels of our state government. That's why I give my enthusiastic support to the Voice for All Oregon Coalition, a diverse grassroots coalition of organizations on the front lines of advancing the interests of Oregon residents including women, people of color, small businesses, and LGBTQ individuals. We share a strong commitment to bringing balance to our democracy by supporting the creation of a small donor elections system in Oregon.

I attended elementary, middle and high school in Gresham and became the first member of my immediate family to graduate with a college degree. My love for learning, multicultural communities and civic engagement has led me to pursue professional opportunities in cities such as Seattle, New York City, Chicago, London and two years of service in West Africa as a Peace Corps Volunteer. My experiences have equipped me with leadership skills and a global perspective that I am now ready to use in civic leadership in the Portland Metro area. The financial barriers I would face, however, make this opportunity feel inaccessible.

Money's power in politics is a significant barrier preventing talented leaders from our community, particularly women and people of color, from the opportunity to run for and win office. To elect the best people and create a more representative government, we need to address the barriers that prevent ordinary Oregonians from running for office by giving candidates from all backgrounds the opportunity to run, regardless of their connections to wealthy donors.

The Small Donor Elections bill will ensure every voice matters in Oregon politics by making small donors a more powerful force in elections and reducing the need for candidates to rely on wealthy donors. By allowing candidates who rely on a community support system to fund their campaigns instead of a few wealthy donors, Small Donor Elections makes it more likely broad community concerns will be addressed in policymaking, not just a few wealthy individuals and special interests.

Thank you for your time. The Small Donor Elections bill is a popular proposal that would address deep voter concern that our government is not working for everyday people. As an invested member of the community, and potential future community leader, I strongly support the Small Donor Elections program. I urge you to pass the Small Donor Election program swiftly this legislative session to re-center our communities in Oregon's democracy.

Thank You,

Fabiola Casas