



To:

Senate Committee on Rules
srules.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov

March 11, 2019

Dear Chair Burdick, Vice-Chair Baertschiger, and Members of the Senate Rules Committee:

My name is Brian Liu, and I am a Community Organizer at the Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO). I am writing on behalf of APANO to express our **support for Senate Bill 861, the Paid Postage Bill**. As a statewide, grassroots organization, we work to ensure *all* APIs are engaged in the issues that affect them. That means removing institutional and social barriers that prevent our community from accessing and participating in our democratic process.

Pre-paid postage stamps are the next step in helping our communities participate in the election. I was a canvasser during the 2018 General Election. During my time knocking on doors in North and Northeast Portland, it became apparent that many people of color and working-class families felt let down and disenfranchised by the voting process. My own roommates, who both work full time, barely had the chance to properly read up on the election given their tight schedules. I believe that the Paid Postage Bill will make the voting process more accessible to communities who continue to face barriers when it comes to voting. People of color and working class families would no longer have to worry about taking time out of their schedules to cast their ballots.

This bill requires the state to pay for ballot-return envelopes that can be returned by business reply mail for each election held in this state. The Paid Postage Bill reinforces the importance of our vote and helps remind voters that their vote matters, that they are encouraged to vote by their Government. When King County in Washington tested pre-paid postage, they found special and local elections had higher turnout rates. Turnout was 37% percent in Maple Valley (up from 32% the previous special election), and 40% in the Shoreline School District (up from 30%). We need pre-paid postage ballots in our state to make sure the turnout rate continues to rise and that disproportionately affected communities face one less obstacle to voting.

APANO understands that our members consist of busy working-class, immigrant families. The last 6 days before the November General Elections, APANO piloted a non-partisan Ballot Assistance Center. The center grew our language capabilities and commitment to make sure that our communities don't make errors that lead to larger disenfranchisement. The center ran an unofficial ballot drop box, helped voters with their ballot, provided rides to Multnomah



County Election Offices, and helped pick up ballots from community member's homes. In 4 days, the center helped over 120 voters.

With pre-paid postage stamps we could, for more than two weeks leading up to every election, turn every mailbox in Oregon into a ballot dropbox, a site for democracy, and an opportunity to bring more Oregonians into our robust civic life.

I thank you for your time and consideration, and urge the Committee to vote in support of SB 861.

Sincerely,
Brian Liu
Community Organizer
APANO