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To: House Committee on Rules
From: Daniel Lewkow, Common Cause Oregon
Date: March 13, 2017
Re: Support for House Bill 2948

Chair Williamson, Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Common Cause, I urge the House Committee on Rules to pass House Bill 2948.

House Bill 2948 encourages young people in Oregon to participate in our democracy as voters. The bill would allow 16-year-olds to pre-register to vote. This is a good civic policy with a proven record of success.

As you know, Oregon already allows 17-year-olds to pre-register to vote, empowering thousands of young people to pre-register in high school classrooms and at the DMV. Adjusting that provision to bring 16-year-olds into the process makes sense, especially with New Motor Voter in place. Many young people go to the DMV at age 16, when they are first eligible for a driver's license, and then may not return for years. That is the window in which to facilitate their pre-registration.

Studies show that pre-registration has been linked to higher voter turnout rates and a greater degree of engagement in our elections. That's because instilling civic action early in a person's development can help build those habits. This is how we create a culture of engagement in our state.

Finally, pre-registration for 16-year-olds is a tested and proven policy. Ten other states across this nation have already taken this approach. This means that there's an existing template for implementing and administering the program, and that we know that it works.

Oregon can be a national leader in increasing access to democracy by passing House Bill 2948. This is an important policy that is tested and has a record of success. It helps to create stronger and better engagement with our elections, and to bring more voices into our civic conversations. Common Cause Oregon respectfully asks you to pass this bill.