



Izzy Rowland
Senate Committee on Rules
Support SB 776

March 11th, 2021

Chair Wagner, Vice-Chair Girod, and Members of the Senate Committee on Rules,

I'm Izzy Rowland, I use she/her pronouns, and I'm a resident of Lake Oswego, which is in Chair Wagner's district. I'm also a senior in high school, a member of Next Up Action Fund's Youth Action Team, and I support Senate Bill 776.

Some people, upon hearing the proposal that 16 and 17-year-olds should be able to vote in their school board elections, worry that it is a slippery slope to allowing even younger people access to the ballot. But sixteen is not an arbitrary number and science backs it up. Experts have made clear there is psychological evidence that lends support for allowing 16-year-olds to vote. Scientists distinguish between "hot" and "cold" cognition. Hot cognition is about decisions that are made under the influence of a group, under stress, or in a hurry. While hot cognition is not developed until later in life, cold cognition, or the ability to make rational decisions, is developed by the age of 16 (Vote 16 USA).

Today's sixteen and seventeen-year-olds are no different from the groups of young people who have historically led movements. When I was 16 and 17, I used my voice to lobby my school board about topics varying from adopting sustainable practices to anti-racist curriculum. Young people can bring energy to the ballot box about issues that affect them. In Takoma Park, Maryland, where 16 and 17-year-olds are allowed to vote in school board elections, they turned out at a higher rate than voters aged 18 and older. Currently, over 196 thousand young Oregonians are pre-registered to vote, meaning there is untapped potential for the amount of civic engagement and voting participation we could be seeing across the state.

Also, starting the habit of lifelong voting earlier and in a more stable environment will help voter turnout. Being allowed to vote in school board elections at age 16 means everyone will have the chance to vote before they leave high school. And while high school is a period of change in young people's lives, it tends to be a more stable time than the first year of college, leaving home, or increasing work hours.

Finally, allowing 16 and 17-year-olds to vote is a matter of holding school boards accountable to the needs of all students. Only students can judge whether their school boards are responsive

to their needs, so passing Senate Bill 776 is a necessary step in holding our leaders accountable.

Sincerely,
Izzy Rowland

Sources

Vote 16 USA. "DEVELOPMENTAL SCIENCE SUPPORTS LOWERING THE VOTING AGE TO 16." *Vote 16 USA*, 2020,
<https://vote16usa.org/developmental-science-supports-lowering-the-voting-age-to-16/>. Accessed
10 March 2021.