



RE: HB 2679 -- Relating to Voting Age at Primary Elections

February 11, 2021

Chair Smith Warner
Vice-Chair Drazan
Vice-Chair Holvey
Members of the House Committee on Rules

Chair Smith Warner, Vice-Chair Drazan, Vice-Chair Holvey, and members of the House Committee on Rules, thank you for the chance to speak with you today. On behalf of the Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO), **I am here to express support for HB 2679**, to allow 17 year olds to vote in the primary elections and allow folks who will be 18 by the general election to vote.

APANO unites Asian and Pacific Islanders to build power, develop leaders, and advance equity through organizing, advocacy, cultural work, and community development. We are committed to building a just world where communities have the power, resources, and voice to determine our own futures. Part of our work at APANO is focused on youth organizing, which leads with the belief that those most affected by an issue should be the ones shaping the solutions. In our programming, we work with youth across the state, to build their skills and confidence in leadership. I will share with you some of their thoughts about HB 2679.

One of our youth members thinks this would be important for youth because it ensures accurate representation of youth perspectives and because it calls upon legislators and politicians to consider youth values while running. Politicians would have to prioritize issues important to young individuals in order to secure their vote in primaries, thus shifting legislative interests toward our group.

From youth member, Caroline, legislators make decisions for all constituents of a society. The moment they're elected into office, they begin shaping the lives of youth, from deciding what and how students learn in class to formulating environmental and economic policies that will shape our future for decades. If younger constituents are given the right to vote, not just for presidents and state legislators but also school board and city officials, elected officials who have been making decisions for youth for decades suddenly actually represent and are accountable for youth voices. Not to mention, if youth are never given the chance to exercise civic power early on in life, it contributes to the current culture of low voter turnout, community engagement, and civic engagement across American demographics.



ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN NETWORK OF OREGON

As our youth know, the consciousness to make political decisions does not come with the legal status of adulthood but rather the education and time taken to invest in making informed decisions at the ballot box. Thank you for your time and we respectfully request you to vote in support of HB 2679.

Sincerely,
Lanea Olson
Asian Youth Organizer