

February 19, 2023
Support for SB 3206

Chair Fahey, Vice-Chairs Breese-Iverson and Kropf, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing to express my strong support for SB 3206, which would allow 16 and 17 year olds to vote in school district elections. I am a proud product of Oregon public schools, graduating from Newport High School in 2017, and firmly believe that this bill is a crucial step forward in raising youth civic engagement and making school leadership more representative for students.

First and foremost, introducing students into the voting population is consistent with values of our democracy. We ask citizens of Oregon to vote so that they can help make decisions about their state, county, city, or other local community. For students, school is that (compulsory) community. They spend a significant amount of waking hours in class or school-based activities, have their worldviews shaped by curriculum, and conduct their learning within the resources allocated to them. As active participants in that system, it's only logical that students should have a voice in making decisions on their district representatives. Furthermore, this experience in civic engagement will only raise youth interest in voting in larger elections, and in turn encourage even more civics education at younger ages.

All across the nation, we're seeing attacks on diversity and identity directed at school districts, with books banned, symbols of inclusion prohibited (see Newberg School District for a local example), and changes made to curricula to portray a harmful, misleading and whitewashed version of history. Students in Oregon deserve to have leaders who listen to *them* making decisions. It's our responsibility as adults to create a better future for younger generations, and we owe it to students to let them have a say in that vision.

Please vote yes on HB 3206.

Thank you,

Sophie Goodwin-Rice
Portland