

## HB3206 Testimony

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

My name is Brandy Penner, I am a parent and former chair and director of the Newberg School Board.

I am here today to speak to the importance of allowing 16 and 17-year-old Oregonians to participate in our democratic process to help ensure that we are a state with leaders and laws representing and serving all Oregonians. Including 16 and 17-year-old in the democratic process will engage and empower lifelong voters and help ensure that elected officials are held accountable by their youngest constituents.

I have experienced firsthand the consequences of an elected body that wielded power unchecked to those they were meant to serve.

During that turbulent time in Newberg, students were outraged by the board majority's steps to gut their education and vital life-saving supports. They saw their educational opportunities being taken away and their futures being stunted by elected officials who were supposed to serve them.

This assault on their basic human rights and legal right to free and appropriate education was happening before their eyes, yet there was little they could do to stop it. As engaged high schoolers pleaded with the board, their cries went unanswered. The majority of board members felt no responsibility to govern with students in mind because they simply did not have to.

Students succeed when they are engaged in their education. Oregon has the opportunity to be a leader in educating and empowering students to be a governing force in their education, to elect leaders that prioritize their needs, and to shape a stronger Oregon for all of us.

Thank you for your time and consideration.