

Submitter: Holly Harrington
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3012

I am writing to express my strong opposition to HB3012, which would allow 16- and 17-year-olds to vote in school board elections. While I fully support encouraging civic engagement among young people, I do not believe this measure is the right approach.

One primary concern is that brain development, particularly in the frontal lobe, is not complete until the mid-twenties. The frontal lobe plays a critical role in decision-making, impulse control, and reasoning—skills essential for making informed voting decisions. Allowing teenagers to vote while they are still developing these abilities raises serious concerns about the maturity and long-term consequences of their choices.

If we truly want to foster civic responsibility among young people, we should begin with stronger civics education. Ensuring that students fully understand government structures, election processes, and the responsibilities of voting is a more effective way to prepare them for future participation in democracy. Without a solid foundation in civics, simply lowering the voting age does not guarantee informed decision-making.

Additionally, school board decisions have significant and lasting impacts on students' education. While young people may have valuable perspectives, the ability to vote should come with the maturity and life experience necessary to weigh complex policy issues. Most 16- and 17-year-olds are still in a stage of personal growth where other priorities—such as academics, social development, and extracurricular activities—should take precedence. We should encourage young people to enjoy their adolescence rather than burden them with electoral responsibilities prematurely.

Another pressing concern is the risk of undue influence on young voters. Unlike adults, 16- and 17-year-olds do not undergo background checks to ensure they are making independent choices free from outside manipulation. Allowing adults, including those with unknown motives, to solicit votes from minors could lead to unintended ethical and safety issues.

For these reasons, I urge you to vote against HB3012 and instead focus on improving civics education to better prepare young people for voting when they reach adulthood. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Holly Harrington