

February 27, 2025

TO: House Committee on Rules

FROM: Lindsey Rohlf

SUBJECT: Support for HB 3012

Chair Bowman, Vice-Chairs Drazan and Pham, and Members of the House Committee on Rules,

I was born and raised in Colorado, but I feel this matter is still quite personal to me, as someone who wished to have more representation at 16 and 17 years old. I'm 25 now, and when I was that age, I was in a political science class during the election season and beginning of the first Trump presidency. I so acutely remember the feeling of helplessness at being so near the age of voting in what felt like a key moment in American political history. At the time, I was grappling with being queer and trying to make the best decisions for who I could trust in a high school that was largely conservative. I know that many who submit testimony on this bill argue that 16/17 year olds are not nearly mature enough to understand the implications of their choices, etc, but I think, in contrast, that a society that does not factor in the opinions of its young people is bound to fail. I think that giving students a voice in their school board elections would be an incredibly important way to ready them to vote on a state and national level, and feel less victim to decisions by the school board that impact them negatively.

Some of the things I remember most distinctly from being 16 years old include the recognition that what I was being taught in school was extraordinarily biased and that my attempts to talk about this were dismissed left and right by adults who thought I was too young to have an opinion on such things. At that age, I was keenly aware that the education I was receiving included nothing about how to survive in the world as a queer person, the rampant misogyny in academia, or the undeniable racism in each and every white-centric historical perspective. Textbooks that were marketed to us as being "undeniable truth" nearly always failed to include perspectives of BIPOC, queer and trans people, and women. It can be disheartening to know at that age that you are part of one (or more) of many historically erased minorities. In most ways, school boards reinforce capitalist, patriarchal, and white centering views.

I think that a bill like this would be hugely important to give BIPOC and queer students a voice, but also for all students to have a say in their education. No one is more impacted by decisions of the school board than the students, and it feels an extraordinary disservice to not let them have a say in their own governance. Give them a chance to take part positively in their community's politics while they are not only in a period of growth and self-realization, but also learning about larger political systems in their country and around the world.

Thank you,
Lindsey Rohlf