

Chair Bowman, Vice-Chairs Drazan and Pham, members of the committee,

I'm Peren Tiemann. I am a law student at Lewis & Clark College of Law, and a longtime resident of Lake Oswego. I ask you today to support HB 3012 to allow 16 and 17 year old students to vote in school board elections.

High school is the time we are taught to find ourselves. To discover what matters most to us, and fight for it. At 13, I started fighting for a future free from gun violence. By the time I turned 18, I had already testified before my school board and state legislature many times. I had spoken to national news outlets as a source on one of the most important national issues for my generation. In my senior year at Lakeridge High School, I organized multiple walkouts for queer rights and an end to gun violence. Hundreds of my peers joined me.

To those who believe that high school students are too young to care about issues at the school board, I ask you to consider my story. When given the opportunity to ask our school board to send out letters about secure gun storage to families in my school district, myself and my peers showed up to testify at the school board meeting. When this body passed a bill allowing us to ban firearms on school grounds district by district, we showed up to ensure our district followed through. When COVID hit, the school boards decided our immediate future, and across the spectrum of opinion, our students were vocal about their needs.

High school is the time to develop our convictions and sense of civic duty. At a time when political leaders are increasingly targeting students, from what books to read, to what flags our schools fly, to who can play on which sports teams, it is more essential than ever to allow our students to engage in this system, become civically engaged citizens, and speak up for themselves.

Many school districts allow one student school board member, who the districts choose, and who typically cannot vote on board matters. This is a significant step forward, but young people are ready to make their own choices.

No person is more impacted by a school board decision than the student. Not the parents, who are not in classrooms learning how to interact with the world. Not the community members who were never in the district's school system at all and have no direct stake. Allowing students to vote in these races only creates a more representative and impactful school board. Voting preserves our society and builds civically engaged young adults.

Our young people care. Please listen to them.
Please support HB 3012.

Thank you,

Peren Tiemann