



Oregon moms and caregivers fighting for gender, economic, and racial justice.

To: House Committee on Rules

From: Family Forward Oregon

Date: 2/28/25

RE: In Support of House Bill 3012 - Student Voice and Democracy Act

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

My name is Andrea Metheney, and I am the Legislative Coordinator for Family Forward. I am writing on behalf of Family Forward Oregon to express our strong support for House Bill 3012, which would allow registered 16- and 17-year-olds to vote in local school board elections, empowering students to have a voice in their education and strengthening our democracy.

As the parent of a 17-year-old in the public school system, it is essential for young people in our communities to have a seat at the table, and allowing them to vote in local school board elections is a crucial step toward achieving this. Their firsthand, current experience as students provides them with invaluable perspectives and insights that must be heard.

School boards significantly influence the educational experience, shaping policies that can profoundly impact students' lives. 16- and 17-year-old students must have a voice in electing the individuals who will oversee their education. For historically marginalized groups, including Black, Indigenous, Latinx, disabled, and LGBTQ+ students, school board members play a crucial role in ensuring equitable access to education, resources, and student support. These students face disproportionate rates of harassment and bias, making it essential that they have a say in selecting decision-makers who will prioritize their needs.

Students are deeply invested in their education and care about the decisions that affect their learning environment. By giving them a voice in electing school board members, we can:

- Foster a sense of ownership and agency among students
- Encourage deeper engagement and involvement in school activities
- Ensure that student concerns and perspectives are represented in educational decision-making

Empowering student voices is an investment in their success and well-being. By recognizing the importance of student participation in shaping their education, we can create a more inclusive and equitable learning environment that supports the diverse needs of all students.

By allowing 16- and 17-year olds to vote in school board elections, Oregon's overall democracy will strengthen. Expanding access to voting in school board elections prepares students to be life-long voters, giving them more opportunities to be more civically engaged at their age to prime them for local, state, and federal elections in the future.

At Family Forward, we believe in the power of young people's voices and are inspired by their potential to shape the future. We urge you to support HB 3201 to foster future engagement in our democratic values.

Thank you for your consideration.

Andrea Metheney

Family Forward Oregon

