

Submitter: Makai Brusa
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3012
Testimonial Opposing Oregon Bill HB 3012:

I am writing to express my concern and opposition to House Bill 3012, which would grant 16- and 17-year-olds the right to vote for school board members. While I understand the intent behind this bill may be to encourage civic engagement among young people, I believe it is misguided and raises several important concerns.

First and foremost, voting is a significant responsibility that requires a certain level of maturity, understanding, and life experience. Many 16- and 17-year-olds are still in the process of developing critical thinking skills and may not have the full capacity to understand the complex issues that school boards address. Their decision-making might be influenced more by peers or external pressures rather than an informed, independent assessment of candidates and policies.

Additionally, voting at this age is premature in terms of overall life experience. By 18, individuals are legally recognized as adults, often with more personal responsibility, such as the ability to drive, sign contracts, and serve in the military. Extending the right to vote at 16 or 17 may blur the lines between adolescence and adulthood and could set a concerning precedent regarding the rights and responsibilities that should be associated with adulthood.

Moreover, while I support the idea of engaging young people in the democratic process, I believe there are more effective ways to achieve this goal without compromising the integrity of our electoral system. There are other avenues, such as programs that encourage high school students to become more involved in civic education, that would better prepare them for the responsibilities of voting when they reach the age of 18.

For these reasons, I urge lawmakers to reconsider this bill and to focus on promoting civic education and engagement in ways that respect the developmental stages of our youth. Voting at 16 or 17 is not the solution, and I believe it is important to uphold the current legal age of voting at 18.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Makai Brusa

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