

Submitter: Rachel Freed
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3012

I am writing to express my strong opposition to House Bill 3012, which permits individuals aged 16 or 17 who are registered to vote to cast ballots in school district elections. While I appreciate the intent behind this legislation to engage young people in the electoral process, I believe this measure is fundamentally flawed and could have unintended consequences.

First and foremost, the cognitive and emotional maturity of individuals in this age group can vary significantly. At 16 or 17, many teenagers are still in the process of developing critical thinking skills and a comprehensive understanding of complex issues. Allowing them to vote in school district elections, which can deeply impact their educational environment, may lead to decisions made without a fully informed perspective.

Moreover, the implications of this bill extend beyond the individual voter. Allowing younger individuals to participate in these elections may skew the results in favor of certain interests, often influenced by peer pressure or social trends rather than informed judgment. This could undermine the integrity of school district governance, affecting policies that impact all students and families.

Additionally, the current age of majority for voting is set for individuals who are 18 years or older, a standard that has been established for good reason. It is crucial to maintain consistency in our voting laws to ensure that all voters have reached a level of maturity and responsibility deemed appropriate for making significant decisions that affect their communities.

While it is essential to encourage civic engagement among young people, there are more effective ways to do so without compromising the integrity of our electoral system. Initiatives focused on education about the voting process, civic responsibility, and community service can empower youth to become informed voters when they reach the appropriate voting age.

In conclusion, I urge you to reconsider the implications of HB 3012. Allowing 16- and 17-year-olds to vote in school district elections is not a step toward greater civic engagement, but rather a decision that could jeopardize the quality and stability of our educational governance. Thank you for considering my perspective on this important issue.