

Submitter: Kyle Chen
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3012
RE: Support HB 3012
House Committee on Rules

3/2/2025

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

My name is Kyle Chen, and I am with Vote16 MN. We are the Minnesota campaign to lower the voting age statewide. We have had numerous successes this year concerning our mission. We are part of a broad coalition that has the support of over 30 organizations. I am writing to testify in strong support of the Student Voice and Democracy Act, HB 3012, which will allow registered 16- and 17-year-olds to vote in local school board elections, giving students a voice in their education and strengthening our democracy.

We have an opportunity to strengthen our democracy by giving students a voice in the decisions that directly impact their education. Students care deeply about their education yet don't have a say in ensuring school boards are responsive to the needs of all students. The Student Voice and Democracy Act will amplify the voices of thousands of students and keep decision-makers accountable.

In both Minnesota and Oregon, extensive research shows that 16 and 17-year-olds are more than ready to vote. The American Academy of Political and Social Science explains that 16 and 17-year-olds have the same mental capacity to vote as any other older group. Parliamentary Affairs uses voting records to show that enfranchising youth leads to higher voter turnout rates for young people, which continues to increase voter participation as those enfranchised individuals grow older. Oxford Academic uses research from current municipalities where 16-year-olds can vote to conclude that it increases civic engagement and awareness in young people. The National Library of Medicine conducted a study which showed that the age group of 16-17-years-olds presented higher rates of political interest and participation in the status quo than the average of older age groups.

The facts simply show that enfranchising young people is an action with limited downside, but great benefit. It allows young people to learn, engage, and simply be represented in their governing bodies.

The Student Voice and Democracy Act fulfills the promise of our democracy while

giving students a voice in our community. As a representative of Vote16 MN, we ask that you please support SB 3012 and pass it out of committee.

Thank you,
Executive Director and Founder
Kyle Chen