

Submitter: Javier Quintana
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3012

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

My name is Javier Quintana, and I come from Phoenix, Oregon, a rural community in our state. Today, I stand before you to express my strong support for House Bill 3012, the Student Voice and Democracy Act, which proposes to extend voting rights to 16- and 17-year-olds in local school board elections.

This issue is deeply personal to me. I woke up at 4 a.m. and drove four hours to be here, showing my commitment to this cause and the importance it holds for students in rural areas like mine.

I have seen firsthand the power of student advocacy and how much of a difference it makes when young people are given a platform to share their experiences and concerns. I have had the privilege of serving on my local Phoenix-Talent Schools District (PTS) board and working closely with my district's leadership, where I have witnessed how student input can lead to positive change. Additionally, I was honored to be elected by the Oregon School Boards Association (OSBA) to serve on the National School Boards Association (NSBA) panel on rural school advocacy. Through this experience, I have gained a deeper understanding of the unique challenges rural students face and the importance of ensuring their voices are heard in decision-making processes.

Granting voting rights to 16- and 17-year-olds in school board elections is a significant step toward empowering students to have a direct say in decisions that affect their education. School boards make critical choices regarding curriculum, resources, and policies that shape our educational experiences. Allowing students to vote ensures that our perspectives are considered, leading to more informed and effective decision-making.

Research indicates that lowering the voting age can lead to increased civic engagement. Communities that have adopted this change have observed higher voter turnout among young people, fostering lifelong voting habits and strengthening our democracy.

Moreover, involving students in the electoral process enhances civic education. When students are granted the responsibility to vote, they become more informed about governmental operations and the importance of participation, leading to a more

engaged and educated citizenry.

It's also important to recognize that many 16- and 17-year-olds are already contributing members of our communities. They work, pay taxes, and are affected by the decisions made by school boards. Providing them with the right to vote acknowledges their contributions and ensures that their voices are heard in matters that directly impact their lives.

By passing HB 3012, Oregon has the opportunity to lead in promoting youth engagement and strengthening our democratic processes. This bill not only empowers students but also enriches our communities by fostering a generation that is informed, involved, and invested in the future.

Thank you for considering this important legislation. I urge you to support HB 3012 and take a decisive step toward a more inclusive and representative educational system.

Sincerely,
Javier Quintana
Phoenix, Oregon