



To: House Committee on Higher Education and Workforce Development
From: Oregon Education Association
RE: Support HB 3012
3/3/2025

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

My name is Kevin Sullivan, and I am a Public Affairs Consultant at the Oregon Education Association, which represents about 38,000 employees in our K-12 schools across this state. 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.

You may know that at the end of last year, educators in the Greater Albany School District went on strike. What you may not know is that the students were very involved and supportive of their teachers during that strike. These students came to rallies and marched with us, walked the picket line with us, and even wore our union swag in solidarity during their football game. The students in Albany were incredibly informed about what was going on with negotiations, and how school board members were responding.

It's not just the students in Albany – students all across Oregon are informed and want to be more involved in their communities. In fact, there are 50,000 16 and 17-year-olds who are already pre-registered to vote. With this bill, we have an opportunity to not only strengthen our democracy by giving students a voice in the decisions that directly impact their education, but we can also help students be more civically engaged. The data is clear – allowing 16 and 17-year-olds to vote for their local school board members will help form the habit of voting and make it more likely that they become lifelong voters.

Every Oregonian deserves to have a voice in the elected leaders who make decisions about their communities. Educators and staff at K-12 schools get to vote for their school board members – why shouldn't the students be able to as well? At 16, students can drive, work, and make medical decisions about their health. Students are the primary recipients of the services provided by the school - and their experiences, needs, and concerns should inform district policy and the priorities of school board members. We talk about centering student voices all the time, and this is yet another way we can do exactly that.

The Student Voice and Democracy Act fulfills the promise of our democracy while giving students a voice in our community. OEA urges you to support HB 3012 and pass it out of committee.

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Thank you,

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