

Submitter: JJ Kunsevi
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3012
RE: Support HB 3012
House Committee on Rules
March 3, 2025

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

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 3012.

I have the great privilege of serving as the Student Representative to the Board of Education for Portland Public Schools. In this role, I represent the voices of over 40,000 students ranging from kindergarten through 12th grade. I see firsthand how essential it is for students to have a seat at the table when decisions are made about our education. This is why I am a strong advocate for HB 3012, the Student Voice and Democracy Act, which will allow 16- and 17-year-olds to vote in local school board elections.

As students, we are directly impacted by the decisions made by school boards. From curriculum choices to resource allocation and student services, the policies enacted by school boards affect us in profound ways. Allowing 16- and 17-year-olds to vote in these elections will amplify the voices of thousands of students, ensuring that our needs and concerns are heard. This is especially crucial since students are the primary recipients of the services provided by schools, and our perspectives should play a vital role in shaping the priorities of elected school board members.

The Student Voice and Democracy Act is an opportunity to strengthen our democracy. We already know that young people are politically engaged. In Oregon, over 50,000 students aged 16 and 17 are pre-registered to vote, and we have a robust voter registration system in place. By lowering the voting age for school board elections, we can make civics education more relevant and impactful. Students will have the chance to apply what they learn in the classroom directly to real-world decisions that affect them.

Oregon has long been a leader in expanding access to voting and protecting democracy, and this bill is a natural next step. It will empower young people to participate in the democratic process, ensuring that the voices of students are included in shaping the future of our education system.

As a representative of Portland Public Schools and as a student myself, I urge you to support HB 3012. This bill will help ensure that our democracy is more inclusive and that students are given a meaningful voice in the decisions that affect our education.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kind regards,

JJ Kunsevi

Student Representative, Portland Public Schools Board of Education