

Oregon House of Representatives
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Subject: Opposition to House Bill 3012

I am writing to express my strong opposition to House Bill 3012, which seeks to allow 16- and 17-year-olds to vote in school board elections. While I fully support student engagement in their education, this bill raises serious concerns about political influence, coercion, and misplaced priorities.

The organizations backing this bill—Next Up Action Fund, Next Up, Unite Oregon, and Unite Oregon Action—are not neutral, student-focused groups. These organizations have agendas tied to funding, political stances, and party affiliations. A quick look into Next Up’s annual reports alone raises serious red flags. Their financials were included in their 2020 report, yet their most recent 2023 annual report omits financial information entirely. Why the sudden lack of transparency? This alone should raise concern about the people and funding behind this bill. Who stands to gain from this, and why are these organizations pushing so hard to influence school board elections?

This is not about benefiting Oregon’s students—it is about solidifying financial and political power. It is a blatant attempt to manipulate and coerce students into voting for candidates who will, in turn, protect the interests of these organizations and the many others that fund them. How will students even be educated on school board candidates? Will candidates be invited to hold assemblies in schools? Will ballot boxes be placed in high schools, with raffles to incentivize voting? The potential for unethical influence is alarming.

Meanwhile, the actual issues affecting students and families remain unresolved. Oregon already ranks among the worst in the country for high school outcomes. In Multnomah County, Portland Public Schools families still don’t have a clear answer on whether the lead pipe situation has been fully resolved. We haven’t received a comprehensive update, and this issue directly impacts the health and safety of students. Special education services continue to be mismanaged, with numerous lawsuits filed by families against PPS. Instead of addressing these urgent matters, legislators are prioritizing a bill that benefits political organizations rather than the students who are struggling in our failing schools.

This bill is a distraction from the real crises facing Oregon’s education system. It is unacceptable to use students as pawns for political and financial gain while their actual needs go unmet. I urge you to oppose House Bill 3012 and focus on improving our schools,

ensuring transparency, and prioritizing real solutions that serve students—not special interest groups.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Ellie Sullivan

Portland, OR