

RE: Support HB 3012
House Committee on Rules

03/03/2025

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

My name is Yenjay Hu, and I am executive director of Vote16NJ, an organization that has successfully led the effort to lower the voting age in New Jersey to 16 for local elections. We are in the process of advocating for a bill similar to HB 3012 in New Jersey. I am writing in support of this bill because I believe that the voice of students is incredibly important and should be valued in creating an educational system that serves all. Additionally, this measure will help strengthen our democracy for years to come, as youth will have the confidence and necessary skills to participate in the civic process for years to come.

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.

Here in New Jersey, the advocacy of countless youth and dedicated activists across the state has resulted in the enfranchisement of 16 and 17 year olds in Newark, New Jersey's largest city. We have implemented a strong voter registration program within that district's schools, and youth are set to cast their first ballots in early April. I would like to emphasize that allowing 16 and 17 year olds to vote in school board elections can logistically be done, and has been done. Here in New Jersey, we are also in the process of passing statewide legislation to lower the voting age for school district elections to 16 with the strong support and endorsement of our current governor, Phil Murphy. He has repeatedly come out in support of the movement. While I do not live in Oregon, I believe strongly in the importance of youth civic engagement, and I strongly support efforts—whether it be Oregon or New Jersey—that align with that belief.

The Student Voice and Democracy Act fulfills the promise of our democracy while giving students a voice in our community. As a representative of Vote16NJ, we ask that you please support SB 3012 and pass it out of committee.

Thank you,
Yenjay Hu
Executive Director, Vote16NJ