

Submitter: Paul Diller

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Rules

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3012

Dear Chair Bowman and Vice-Chairs Drazan and Pham,

I thank the sponsors of this bill for bringing the issue of 16- and 17-year-olds voting to the fore once again as former Oregon Secretary of State Shemia Fagan did six years ago as a state senator. Professor Josh Douglas of Kentucky Law School has written persuasively about why expanding the franchise to this group of people could be beneficial. The argument that I found most persuasive is that it allows teenagers to form a habit of voting early and makes them participants in democracy for life.

The problem with this well-intentioned bill, however, is in the execution. Requiring county clerks to administer a separate election with a separate voter roll for just school board elections would be very logistically difficult as well as expensive. Of all the immense problems Oregon currently faces -- homelessness, graffiti, crime, a stagnant economy, declining or stagnant population, and underfunded schools -- the issues addressed by this bill rank pretty low on the list. Thanks for bringing attention to the issue but maybe make it part of a larger voting reform package at a better time for the state.

Sincerely,
Paul Diller