

Submitter: Beth Chvilicek
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3012

Chair Bowman, Vice Chairs Drazan and Pham, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Beth Chvilicek, and I live in Portland. I am writing to testify in strong support of the Student Voice and Democracy Act (HB 3012), which will empower registered 16- and 17-year-olds to vote in local school board elections. This bill ensures that students—those most directly affected by school board decisions—have a voice in shaping their education and strengthens our democracy in the process.

Like many others, my advocacy began in high school when I saw firsthand the gaps in representation within my community. I regularly attended school board meetings in my rural hometown and witnessed board members dismissing student concerns, cutting off speakers, and making decisions without centering those most impacted—students themselves. Had I been able to vote for my school board representatives at the time, I would have seized the opportunity to elect leaders who truly listened.

My experience is far from unique. Conversations with students and community members have made it clear: young people are engaged, passionate, and deeply invested in their schools. Yet, they remain one of the only groups barred from voting for their direct representatives. This disconnect weakens our education system and denies students the ability to recognize and uplift school board members who advocate for them—or to hold those who don't accountable.

Oregon has the opportunity to lead by example. By passing HB 3012, we can affirm that student voices matter and that democracy is strongest when those impacted have a say. I urge you to pass this bill out of committee and take this critical step toward a more representative and equitable school system.

Thank you for your time and consideration.