

To: House Rules Committee  
From: Ari Franco, Common Cause Oregon  
Re: Student Voice & Democracy Act (HB 3012)  
Date: March 5, 2025  
**Position:** Favorable

### **Common Cause Alliance for Emerging Power**

Common Cause's youth program, The Alliance for Emerging Power, organizes across the country by providing young people the tools they need to build power to hold their schools and communities civically accountable. Our organizing strategy includes advocacy days, voter education programming, voter mobilization efforts, leadership workshops, voter protection programs, and supporting policies that aim to increase young voter turnout.

### **Support for the Student Voice and Democracy Act**

Across America, education is under attack and the people most impacted have not been given a seat at the table, as they continue to have decisions made for them by school boards that they do not select. At Common Cause, we believe that starting civic engagement at the age of eighteen can be too late because of all the life changes 18-year-olds experience during the transition from high school to college or working. Civic engagement must be cultivated and supported while a young person still has their teachers, family, and community to help ensure access to accurate information. We are committed to the empowerment of the next generation of leaders, and uplifting the voices of young members of our community in their local elections is an important step in this cause.

According to Circle at Tufts University's Growing Voters Report<sup>1</sup>, communities should "support youth as they learn to connect their concerns with the decisions made by local, state, and national leaders, so they understand how voting can make a difference in their communities." Oregon can support its youth today by giving 16-year-olds the right to vote in their local school board elections. This will allow them to have a local school board that truly represents their interests, and at the same time giving them the experiential learning of putting civic engagement into practice and influencing local policy. With the experience of voting as young as sixteen, by the time these students have the ability to vote on a state and federal level at eighteen, they will have already formed the habit of engagement with their community. Studies looking at Scottish voters who were enfranchised by Vote 16 policy in 2014 were still voting at higher rates in 2021 than peers whose first opportunity to vote was at 18<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://circle.tufts.edu/index.php/circlegrowingvoters>

<sup>2</sup> [https://vote16.substack.com/p/new-study-shows-vote-16-policy-increases?utm\\_source=post-email-title&publication\\_id=833952&post\\_id=156621982&utm\\_campaign=email-post-title&isFreemail=true&r=fdba&triedRedirect=true&utm\\_medium=email](https://vote16.substack.com/p/new-study-shows-vote-16-policy-increases?utm_source=post-email-title&publication_id=833952&post_id=156621982&utm_campaign=email-post-title&isFreemail=true&r=fdba&triedRedirect=true&utm_medium=email)

We urge your support.

Sincerely,

Ari Franco

Youth Engagement Organizer, Common Cause

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