

Date: March 3rd, 2025
To: House Committee on Rules
From: Nick Keough, Political and Legislative Organizer, AFT-Oregon
Re: Support for HB 3012: the Student Voice and Democracy Act

Chair Bowman, Vice-Chairs Drazen and Pham, and Members of the Committee,

AFT-Oregon is a federation of 27 local unions representing 18,000 education workers across early learning, K-12 classified, community colleges, and public universities. Today, our labor federation is writing to express our **enthusiastic support of HB 3012: the Student Voice and Democracy Act, which represents a critical step toward increasing student engagement, strengthening our democracy, and ensuring that those most affected by school board decisions have a voice in the process.**

Across Oregon, students are deeply impacted by the policies set by school boards – determining everything from curriculum and funding priorities to extracurricular programs and student support services. Yet, students currently have no say in these elections. **HB 3012 would change that by allowing registered 16- and 17-year-olds to vote in school board races, giving them a direct stake in shaping their education.**

We know that when students feel invested in their schools, they are more engaged and more likely to succeed. Allowing students to vote in school board elections is a simple, meaningful way to foster that connection. At 16, young people are already trusted to drive, work, and make medical decisions. They should also have the right to help elect the leaders who shape their educational experience.

Oregon is well-positioned to take this step. With tens of thousands of 16- and 17-year-olds already pre-registered to vote through Motor Voter, the infrastructure is in place to ensure a smooth transition. Adding school board elections to their ballot would make civic education more tangible, allowing students to apply what they learn in the classroom to real-world democracy.

This bill is also about fairness and equity. School board decisions have a lasting impact on students' opportunities and experiences, especially for those from marginalized communities

who often face additional barriers to success. Giving students a vote ensures that their voices are part of the decision-making process, leading to policies that better reflect their needs.

By passing HB 3012, Oregon can once again lead the way in expanding access to democracy and fostering a lifelong habit of civic participation. **AFT-Oregon urges your support for this important legislation. Thank you for your time and consideration.**

Signed,

AFT-Oregon

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