

Submitter: Janani Maheswaran
Committee: House Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: Support HB 3012

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

My name is Janani Maheswaran, and I live in Portland, Oregon. I am writing to testify in strong support of the Student Voice and Democracy Act, HB 3012, which will allow registered 16- and 17-year-olds to vote in local school board elections, giving students a critical voice in their education thereby strengthening our democracy.

As a college student who recently earned the right to vote, I have realized the power that comes with having a voice in decisions that affect my community. However, when I was in high school, I had no say in policies that directly shaped my education, even though I was experiencing their impact every day. While I learned about the intricacies of American systems in AP Government, I was shocked that there wasn't much students could participate in until reaching the voting age. Allowing 16- and 17-year olds to have their voices heard in school board elections would spark early interest in a crucial civic duty. From curriculum to funding, student's opinions are critical in decisions made impacting them, which is why we urgently need to pass the Student Voice and Democracy Act out of committee.

Thank you for your time,
Janani