

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

My name is Bo, and I live in Portland OR. 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 voice in their education and strengthening our democracy.

Expanding voting rights in school board elections to include 16- and 17-year-olds is a necessary step toward fostering civic engagement and ensuring that students have a voice in decisions directly affecting their education. Research consistently shows that students who participate in school governance and extracurricular activities are more engaged, have better attendance, and are more likely to graduate. Many students—especially those from historically marginalized communities—face systemic barriers that impact their educational experience, making it essential that school board members are accountable to those they serve. At 16, individuals can drive, work, pay taxes, and make medical decisions, demonstrating the responsibility necessary for informed voting. Studies confirm that 16-year-olds possess the same level of civic knowledge and decision-making ability as their 18-year-old peers, and encouraging voting at this age builds lifelong habits of democratic participation. Including 16- and 17-year-olds in school board elections strengthens Oregon's democracy, ensures a more representative education system, and empowers students to shape the future of their learning environments.

I hope to see the Student Voice and Democracy Act pass (HB 3012)

Thank you,  
Bo