

**To: Senate Rules Committee**  
**From: Kate Titus, Common Cause Oregon**  
**Re: First Time Voters (SB 1574)**  
**Date: February 18, 2026**

### **Common Cause**

Common Cause is a nonpartisan organization that works for open, honest, accountable government. We are 1.5 million Americans – including roughly 30,000 Oregonians – working together to realize the unfinished promise of democracy.

### **Support for the First Time Voters Act**

In these polarized times – no matter where each of us stands politically – we may have moments where we doubt the reasoning skills of some of our fellow voters. It's easy to convince ourselves that *we ourselves* are smart voters, while some others may not be fully equipped for this responsibility. 😊

Of course, there was a time when people argued that women weren't capable to vote... and a long and continuing history of excluding voters based on race... and at the country's founding, a belief that only a small group of white property owners were sufficiently capable to vote. *But as we've come to believe more fully in the democracy we profess, we've gradually expanded the franchise.*

**True democracy involves broadly shared decision-making. To borrow a phrase from the disability rights movement: "Nothing about us without us." The more inclusive we can be, the more representative we are, the better and more equitable our decisions. That benefits all of us.**

Now science indicates that by 16 years of age, our "cold" cognition has generally matured to adult levels. And in Oregon, 17-year-olds have already engaged in years of K-12 civics education, and many are driving, working, and paying taxes. There's no reason to deny this population a voice in the decisions that affect their lives. Moreover, empowering first-time voters to vote in primaries is a way to strengthen life-long voting habits.

Common Cause stands on the side of democracy. The organization helped pass the 26<sup>th</sup> Amendment, that lowered the voting age to 18. **We urge your support for SB 1574** to allow registered 17-year-olds to participate in major party primaries if they will be 18 by the consecutive general election.