

Chair Rosenbaum, Members of the Committee,

My name is Gina Benavidez. I live in Salem and I'm a junior at West Salem High School. I'm 16-years-old and I'm testifying in favor of House Bill 2988 because I think it's a really great idea that can help people like me and my friends.

I do my best to be an engaged student and Oregonian. I'm on West Salem's founding Mock Trial team, have done speech and debate, I volunteer for the Rotary Club, participate in AVID and play lacrosse for West Salem since freshman year. I care about giving back to my community and I believe House Bill 2988 would help me and my peers grow even more civically engaged by allowing us to get registered to vote while we're learning about government and how democracy works in America.

Right now, we're learning about rights of the people in U.S. Government and History classes, about the importance of voting and of doing our civic duty. We're learning that one vote can make a difference, but for many of my peers where and how to register to vote is less clear. When I learned about Motor Voter, then it became clear. But then I learned that I can't use it yet, even though I can get a drivers license. I think we should fix that.

Since I'm 16, it's probably no surprise to you that a lot of my friends are getting licenses right now. We're excited to have the freedom that comes with a license, but also recognize that it comes with responsibility. Much like being a voter -- it's both a freedom and a responsibility. My peers and I don't just want to be good drivers and students, we want to be good Oregonians. It would be great if we could get a jump-start on doing our civic duty by getting registered to vote when they get our license.

Motor Voter just makes so much sense. But what sense does it make to let such a great program not be used to the fullest it can be? I hope you'll help make Motor Voter finally be utilized right and allow every eligible citizen who gets a license to have the opportunity to register to vote. I urge you to pass House Bill 2988.

Thank you very much for allowing me to testify before you today.