

Chair Rosenbaum, Members of the Committee. For the record, my name is Amanda Tripp Johansson. I am the Director of the Democracy Cup, a program of the Bus Project Foundation and earning my Masters degree in Educational Leadership and Policy at PSU. I am here to urge you to support House Bill 2988 and allow 16 year olds to pre-register to vote, just as 17 year olds can do now.

The Democracy Cup engages local young professionals to serve as mentors helping student develop as leaders within their community and bringing democracy to life in high school classrooms throughout Oregon. The workshop teaches students how to advocate for their beliefs, engage in a discussion about issues that matter to them, and concludes with an opportunity students for students to register or pre-register to vote.

In my work as the director of the democracy cup I have interacted with more than 10,000 high school juniors and seniors, many of whom are from the districts you all represent, in both rural and urban communities from 13 counties ranging from Union and Umatilla to Marion and Lane.

The most common misconception about young people is that we don't care. I have observed without question, a reality opposite of this perception. Students care so deeply about their communities, their families, and their education. But students are not aware of how they can engage as citizens and make a difference in the world.

The Oregon Department of Education's core standards for social science in HS.34 requires that schools "Explain the responsibilities of citizenship." There is no question that schools and teachers are trying their best but class sizes are larger than ever, resources are limited and a 2012 City Club of Portland Executive Summary on Civics found that there is a gap in the education we provide; we are not adequately preparing graduates to become active citizens.

Bill 2988 addresses this need by ensuring that 16 year olds have the opportunity to pre register to vote during their first interaction with the government when obtaining a drivers license at the DMV. By allowing students to pre-register, we will show students that voting is another coming of age rite, a part of being an adult and a community member.

We cannot leave this responsibility exclusively to our schools. HB 2988 shows our students that the voices of all Oregonians, including young people, need to be heard and a part of our democracy. Young people care but lack the knowledge of how to directly influence the things that they care about to effectively change their community. I urge you to allow our students the ability to express their convictions through the electoral process by getting them on the track to become lifelong, engaged voters.

I am asking Senate Rules Committee for their support of HB 2988. This ensures that all Oregonians have a voice in our democracy. Thank you for taking the time to listen to a few of those voices today. Please vote yes on HB 2988 and show young people that they matter and help foster the development of engaged citizens and the leaders of our future.