

To: Senate Rules Committee
From: Elise Brown
RE: Support HB 2988
May 22, 2013

To Chair Rosenbaum and members of the Committee:

I am a senior at West Linn High School, a Bus Project volunteer, and – starting this September – a voter. Since seventh grade, I've kept a close eye on the political world. I have written columns, knocked on doors, and written testimony for issues I care about all throughout high school. When I turned 17, I registered to vote, as the law currently permits. I registered with immense pride, joy, and enthusiasm, but so many of my fellow students are not even aware that they can take this step towards civic engagement.

700,000 Oregonians are eligible to vote, but are unregistered. Far too many of these are 18-22 years old. It is not that they do not want to vote; they miss registration deadlines because they need the resources to register more open to them. Organizations that register voters need more support to make sure our demographic, our interests, our viewpoint can be truly represented. Youth voters can, and must, help our government create long-term solutions – but only if they can register.

20,000 16-year-olds apply for their driver's licenses every year, and most of them don't return to the DMV until they're 21. Those are a lot of voters whose attentions can be caught quickly and easily, whose voices can be guaranteed to be heard, by having them register early.

HB 2988 pushes teens closer to our right to vote at the same time we earn the privilege to drive. In doing both, we are learning and appreciating how to be responsible, active citizens, so why not put these two milestones in the same trip to the DMV? If law, this bill would push more young people – a significant portion of the future electorate – to think early, often and wisely about political decisions.

Therefore, we urge you to support HB 2988. Let's welcome more active young people like me into the electorate with open arms, and make voting more accessible to all the people in our great state.

Thank you very much for your time.

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