

To Chair Garrett and members of the Committee:

My name is Elise Brown. I am a volunteer with the Bus Project and a senior at West Linn High School. Ever since seventh grade, I have been absolutely in love with the political process. Someday I hope to have a career in it as a community organizer, journalist, commentator, or legislative aide. Until then, I've been keeping up with the political world, canvassing for candidates I support, and submitting written testimony for issues I care about.

I am seventeen years old.

That being the case, I registered to vote shortly after my birthday, but to make the process easier, it would have been nice to have registered when I was sixteen, at the same time I was applying for my driver's permit. It would have saved time and it would have saved gasoline. My interest in politics would have accelerated even faster because I would have a direct investment in the system, not just a general interest.

20,000 16-year-olds apply for their driver's licenses at the DMV every year. Those are a lot of future voters whose attention can be caught early, quickly and easily by having young people like me register early.

HB 2988 fills the accessibility gap that exists between the right to vote and the privilege to drive. 700,000 people in the state of Oregon are eligible to vote, but are unregistered; if we can register to vote at the same time we receive our licenses, that number can get smaller. In this state, in this nation, the process of becoming an engaged voter should be as quick and easy as possible. Besides, high school civics students would have more of an incentive to pay attention and learn because they would be directly involved in the system. Even for students who are not quite as politically engaged as I am, it would push more young people – people who will make up quite a large portion of the electorate one day – to think early about political decisions.

Therefore, we urge you to support HB 2988. Think of all the people who will have a newfound voice in the process, and will have an incentive to make their voice informed, because of the actions the Rules Committee will take today.

Thank you very, very much for your time.

Elise Brown

503-754-6436