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To: House Committee on Rules  
From: Melinda Joy, PSU Student from Coos Bay Oregon  
Date: February 2, 2015  
Re: Testimony in support of HB 2177, New Motor Voter

Chair Hoyle and members of the committee,

My name is Melinda Joy, and I'm from Coos Bay Oregon. I am here to urge you to support HB 2177 as a student in Oregon. HB 2177, or New Motor Voter, is about making a simple, safe and accurate voter registration system and process.

I began life in an unstable environment and my family never really had much. I was a ward of the state, before I was sponsored by American Legion Auxiliary to attend Girl's State which taught me about responsible citizenship. I went on to participate in community college completing my associate's degree at Southwestern Oregon Community College before pursuing Public Health at Portland State University, where I am in school now. At Portland State I've been elected a student senator and have started my own student group dedicated to ending rape called Students Alliance for Ending Rape.

Everyone has different issues they care about and reasons they want to vote. For me its about having a voice and education. We should be spending our time debating these issues rather than wondering if engaged citizens will receive a ballot in the next election. As a Ward of the State the most important thing to me was being heard. A vote is my way of communicating with my government. A vote allows me to communicate my stress with costs at school, let the government know I need more financial aid because they've divested themselves from higher education, a vote allows me to take issue with tuition hikes and soaring textbook costs. Those are the questions we should be tackling. Especially when the data the DMV currently collects for drivers licenses offers a simple and accurate voter registration process for eligible voters and updates the address for people already registered. Let's get this done so we can tackle the hard issues like education.

For too many students a vote isn't something they can call their own. Registering to vote takes time and when you're a student it's just another of the thousands of other things you need to juggle to keep your bank account green long enough to complete your education. That burden is carried disproportionately by the needy like myself. This is an opportunity to give people like me one less thing to worry about and one big way to make an impact. Equal Access to Voting is about more than convenience it's about listening to your children and remembering that their future is our future too.

I urge you to support HB 2177. Thank you.