

My name is Harrison Schreiber and I am a junior at Crescent Valley High School in Corvallis. I am here as a member of the Oregon Bus Project, an organization focused on voter education and engagement for young people. My 17th birthday was a few months ago, and I have to say I was extremely excited to finally be able to pre register to vote!

I have been interested in politics since I was very young and have always tried to find outlets for my interest. Most of my friends thought I was kind of odd because of this passion, especially when I would try to get them involved too. It made me sad that I could not convey how important voting was to my friends. The summer after my freshman year, I first got involved with the Bus Project in hopes of empowering myself and finding opportunities to empower my peers. I have since done a number of voter registration drives at my high school with the Bus Project's support. I loved seeing the impact I was able to have on people at my school and show them that you are never too young to be thinking about your community and how to make an impact. I was saddened, however, when I had to turn away many of my peers who were interested in registering but were not yet 17. I want everyone to believe in democracy and in their ability to make change. Pre registering people at a younger age gives teenagers an opportunity to think critically about democracy and the voting process before their 18th birthday. This is why I am so passionate about passing a bill allowing pre registration for 16 year olds.

I know you may be concerned about the logistics for such a change in voter policy, but numerous states, such as Hawaii, Colorado, and Florida have already adopted similar policies with relative ease and at little or no additional expense to the budget.

People aged 18 to 24 are far less likely to be registered, let alone vote. In 2008, there were a record number of young people in this demographic voting. However, they still had the lowest voter turnout of any age demographic, with less than half of eligible voters actually voting. This is concerning because it means that this group of people is being underrepresented. Their needs may not be met and their concerns might be taken less seriously. It is important to boost voter involvement in the 18 to 24 year old demographic because they have a unique perspective and valuable insights. States like Florida, who have already enacted pre registration for 16 year olds, reported a 4% increase in turnout from young people.

I believe that this bill will help show young people, like my friends, that they are not too young to pay attention to what is going on in the world or to make a difference. Giving 16 year olds the ability to pre-register allows an even younger subset of the population to begin thinking about what ideals and what issues matter to them. So, when they are finally old enough to vote, they will be ready, informed, and enthusiastic about having their voices heard. A pre registration bill for 16 year olds will boost voter engagement and empowerment, and will bring a voice to an age group that has consistently not had a strong one.

I urge you to pass the pre registration bill this session.

Thank you for your time!