

To: Senate Rules Committee
From: AFT-Oregon
Date: March 15, 2017
Re: Support for House Bill 2948

Chair Burdick, members of the committee,

On behalf of the American Federation of Teachers-Oregon, I respectfully urge your support for House Bill 2948, which would extend the privilege of voter pre-registration to 16 year-olds. As an organization that serves students from pre-K to post-secondary, we believe that Oregon's youth are a vital part of our democratic process.

Since 2007, Oregon has allowed 17 year-olds to pre-register to vote. Since 2015, this has included 17 year-olds who interact with the DMV and are automatically pre-registered to vote via Motor Voter. Right now, approximately 20,000 16 year-olds around the state go to the DMV to get their license for the first time, but aren't being pre-registered to vote. They won't have another qualifying interaction with the DMV until they are 24, leaving thousands of youth behind.

Research shows that when young people engage in the democratic process, they are more likely to remain active, engaged voters into adulthood. According to a 2009 study, "Registering the Youth Through Voter Pre-Registration," in 2008 the election in Florida, pre-registered young voters turned out a rate 4.7 percent higher than their counterparts who registered after age 18.

Ten states and the District of Columbia already allow 16 year-olds to pre-register to vote. Several of those states – including Louisiana, Utah, and Florida – passed those policies with bipartisan support. In one state, Louisiana, voters are also automatically registered to vote at the DMV.

The experience of other states has also demonstrated that there is little to no cost to implement voter pre-registration for 16 year-olds. Oregon can easily integrate pre-registration into existing systems for paper and automatic registration, with automatic registration being the most efficient way to collect and process voter registration information.

We believe it is time for Oregon to make the simple policy change by allowing 16 year-olds to pre-register to vote by passing HB 2948.

Sincerely,



Marcus Swift
Director of Political and Legislative Affairs
AFT-Oregon