

To: House Rules Committee

From: Clark A Shimeall

Date: March 5, 2017

Re: Support for House Bill 2948

Chair Williamson, members of the committee,

On behalf of Oregon's youth, I respectfully urge your support for House Bill 2948, which would extend the privilege of voter pre-registration to 16 year-olds. As a member of the Oregon Bus Project, I've seen firsthand how enthusiastic my peers can be when given the opportunity to engage in the political process.

Last fall, a group of students at my school implemented a voter registration drive with the support of the Oregon Bus Project. We picked up registration cards in bulk from the courthouse, set up a table, and conducted presentations on the importance of voting. The drive was incredibly successful. Out of the 327 seniors at our school we collected 109 fully-filled cards- one third of our total class! The experience was empowering not only because it was so successful, but because our interactions with our peers were so overwhelmingly positive. Students were genuinely interested in learning how to vote and about the specifics of the process. Of the students we talked to, every single one was willing to fill out a voter registration form.

I learned firsthand that when youth are given the opportunity to engage politically, they'll pursue it. The kids in my class that weren't politically active weren't apathetic- they simply had never learned the basics of political involvement. A significant portion of the students at my school are underprivileged. Many of them have grown up in households where voting is the exception, not the norm. Many of them have parents who cannot even legally vote. And many of these kids were among the most receptive and enthusiastic to getting engaged.

16-year-old preregistration does not fully solve the issue of low civic engagement among youth, but it is a vital step in the right direction. I believe it is well past time for Oregon to allow 16 year-olds to pre-register to vote. Please pass HB 2948.

Thank you,

Clark Shimeall