

To: House Rules Committee

Date: March 16, 2017

From: Maya Seiber

RE: House Bill 2928

Chair Williamson, members of the committee,

I'm Maya Seiber, and I'm a student and also a volunteer with the Oregon Bus Project. One of the main goals of the Bus Project is to increase political engagement among young people, an issue I've become very passionate about over the past few years. In fact, at this year's Youth and Government conference, I co-sponsored a bill which would allow 17-year-olds to vote in the Oregon primary elections if they would be 18 by the general election, so I am an enthusiastic supporter of any legislation that will encourage young people to make their voice heard.

Although the voter turn out for young adults has been increasing in recent years, 18-24 is still the least active age bracket in terms of voting. As a high school student with a deep interest in politics and a concern for the consequences that elections and policy changes will have on myself and my peers as we grow up and learn to navigate the world, it's disheartening to see such a lack of engagement from my demographic. The simplest solution to this problem is taking measures to encourage more young people to vote. I believe pre-registering 16-year-olds to vote is an excellent first step, because it extends to an even younger group of people the idea that their opinion matters, and they can make a difference in their world by choosing to make that opinion heard.

This election season, many of my peers, especially those who had just turned 18 and were voting for the first time, were extremely excited to engage in political activism and discourse. By giving younger teenagers the ability to pre-register to vote, we can both increase the ease of voting itself once they are of age as well as show them that they really do have a place and a voice in politics. Ten states, including some as populous as California and Florida, have implemented similar policies and seen significant increases in voter turnout among young people.

In a time where politics are quickly becoming more and more polarized, giving as many people as possible a platform on which to state their opinion and contribute to change is critically important. Oregon, as it has with bills like vote-by-mail and allowing 17 year-olds to pre-register to vote, can help lead the charge on increasing voter turnout by allowing 16-year-olds to pre-register to vote.

For these reasons, I strongly encourage you to vote in favor of the bill on pre-registration.

Thank you for listening.