

Senate Committee On Rules
Thursday, March 11, 2021
In strong support of SB 776 and SJR 25

I am a current senior at Jefferson High School in Portland, Oregon, as well as the Student Representative to the Portland Public Schools Board of Education. The views expressed herein are my own.

The current voting age of 18 is entirely arbitrary and results in the needless disenfranchisement of many who are perfectly capable of partaking in the democratic process. Indeed, plenty of those who happen to be 16 or 17 are far more politically informed and prudent than a number of those above the latter. To simply label all people who are members of this age bracket as too “emotional” or “undeveloped” to make rational decisions is to embrace prejudice, reject nuance, and prevent capable people from having a say over who governs them. In our eternal pursuit of true “rule by the people,” we would do best to challenge attitudes and laws to these effects. Lowering the voting age specifically with reference to school board elections is perhaps Oregon’s most crucial next step in this process — of all elected bodies, it is by far school boards that have the greatest day-to-day impacts on the lives of our 16- and 17-year-olds. They deserve a say in these decisions.

Respectfully,
Nathaniel Shue