



Cameron Iizuka  
Senate Committee on Rules  
Support SB 776

March 9th, 2021

Good afternoon Chair Wagner, Vice-Chair Girod, and Members of the Senate Committee on Rules,

My name is Cameron Iizuka, I use she/her pronouns, and I am a high school student in Lake Oswego. As the Chair of my School District's Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Advisory Committee, the Editor-in-Chief of my school's newspaper, and a youth supporter of Next Up Action Fund, I am incredibly excited about SB 776 and its potential impact on 16 and 17 year olds around the state. SB 776 will allow young people the ability to participate in local government through School Board elections and this is necessary to foster global thinkers and promote civically-engaged students who recognize the necessity and power of voting.

I only recently got involved with district-level DEI work and activism, but even before, as a 16-year old, many of the biggest moments in my high school career came from decisions made by the School Board. Whether that's meant something as banal as revising the Social Studies curriculum or something more pressing like ruling on whether School Resource Officers should continue to be in schools, nearly every decision that the Lake Oswego School Board makes affects students in some capacity. Especially now, with districts deciding how to reopen schools as we continue to live in a global pandemic, it's all the more crucial for democracy to be maintained, for students to have their voices heard and represented.

Beyond encouraging students to use their voices and weigh in on issues that they're passionate about, allowing voting in local School Board elections for 16 and 17-year olds would mean that students would actually vote *more* often once they turn 18 and are allowed to participate in all elections. Studies show that younger, first-time voters are more likely to become life-long, habitual voters. In fact, data from places that have lowered the voting age shows that 16-year-olds do indeed vote at higher rates than first-time voters.<sup>1</sup> With more emphasis on amplifying youth voices, studies show that they respond, and in numbers.

If Oregon youth are to see themselves truly represented and their concerns in their schools, legitimate, voting in School Board elections must be allowed for 16 and 17-year olds. With the passage of SB 776, we will not only see an influx of voter participation among youth, but also a

trend of increased civic engagement in general. I support SB 776 and I urge you to vote in support as well. Thank you.

Sincerely,  
Cameron Iizuka

<sup>1</sup> Leaving the Nest and the Social Act of Voting: Turnout among First-Time Voters, Bhatti and Hansen