

Submitter: Emmie Davena
On Behalf Of: As a mother and former educator
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Measure: HJR20

Young people today are some of the most engaged and passionate citizens we have, and they care deeply about the issues that affect them and their communities. They are already driving change in so many ways, from gun violence prevention to climate action. Lowering the voting age to 16 will only give them more power to make their voices heard and effect meaningful change.

Lowering the voting age is not a new or radical idea. In fact, the idea of enfranchising 16-year-olds dates back to at least the 1970s, and several countries around the world have already done so. In the United States, we already allow 16-year-olds to drive, pay taxes, work up to 44 hours per week, be charged criminally as adults, be dual enrolled in community college, be emancipated, and 17-year-olds can enlist in military branches, so it is only fair that we also allow them to vote.

People will argue that 16-year-olds are not mature or informed enough to make sound decisions at the ballot box. But I disagree. As a former educator, I have seen firsthand how intelligent, thoughtful, and engaged 16-year-olds can be. Moreover, when young people are given the opportunity to vote, they rise to the occasion. In the 2018 midterms, voter turnout among 18- to 29-year-olds surged, with a record 36% of eligible young people casting ballots. Imagine how much higher that number could be if we lowered the voting age to 16.

In short, HJR 20 is a bold and necessary step toward a more inclusive democracy, and I urge all Oregonians to support it. Let's empower our young people to become active and engaged citizens who can help build the just and equitable society we all deserve. I encourage the full passage of HJR 20. Thank you.