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On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Rules
Measure: HB3206

The purpose of serving on a school board is to develop and support a vision for public schools and set standards of performance for educating all students. While on the surface this bill (HB 3206) seems to be progressive and student empowering in reality it would fracture and create a larger gap in local policy for children in schools.

Some 16/17 year olds would embrace this opportunity as a way to volunteer and share their personal political opinions. For example, one of our local school board members has successfully recruited and used student's "as grassroots foot soldiers" for their own election campaigns. Students have been recruited to go knocking door to door, plant yard signs and "get out the vote" for this candidate. However, some students have found when their views differ from the campaign they are ostracized from their peer group. The energy and enthusiasm for this kind of participation is illuminating and has shown the clear potential of students being used as subservient in the process.

Again, the purpose of the school board is to establish a vision and goals for the staff and students teaching and learning in the school. Vision is the key because it means the elected member has the ability to consider the NEEDS and WANTS of all parties. The consideration of what all stakeholders NEED is crucial and takes a combination of wisdom, life experience, openness and the ability to prioritize issues that may not be "popular". WANT is the temperance of youth and want is not inclusive or considerate to all parties needs. Developmentally 16/17 year olds are in the throes of egocentrism, insecurity and the feeling of being judged. WANT is important to acknowledge, but NEED is critical to address. Later in adolescence (age 18-15) is the time when young people are developing critical thinking, and gain more independence in thought and action so the individual can discern the policy difference between NEED and WANT.

Each year, day and moment in school is important for the student experience. That said, students are visitors in a system that requires experience and history in order to best address the NEEDS of all stakeholders (students and staff). Listening sessions and school surveys are a better way to ensure all students have a voice and can participate in their local school system.

Thank you for considering this testimony on HB 3206.