

February 20, 2023

**Re: Support for HJR 20 - Youth Vote Bill**

Chair Fahey, Vice-Chairs Breese-Iverson and Kropf, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in strong support of HJR 20, Our Future, Our Vote. My name is Em Bookstein and I am a resident of Portland.

When I was 19 or 20, I started helping with campus voter registration, and through that, got in the habit of voting in every election. Voting made me pay more attention to politics and the decisions being made that affect my future and the futures of everyone around me. I've since learned that starting to vote at an early age helps create a "civic habit" that encourages lifelong participation. At the same time, I often think about how I wish I'd had more of an opportunity to be politically engaged when I was in high school, when those experiences would have been even more formative. I'm 34 years old now and still very much catching up on how to engage in political processes.

I support this bill because the decisions our elected leaders make today will have very real consequences for us, for the rest of our lives. Historically, the biggest demographic of voters has been older, often retirees. And while I value the vast life experience they bring to their voting decisions, I also recognize that we often don't have the same priorities, or even the same values.

It's clear from looking at the youth movements of today that there are huge concerns facing people coming up in the generation after me. And these are not generation-specific concerns: their concerns are my concerns, too. I want young people's voices to be heard on issues of climate change and a failing economy – situations that young people have inherited that impact opportunities for home ownership, higher education, or even financial security. Many older people in earlier generations not only had these opportunities, but took them for granted. For the future of young people in Oregon, please vote yes on HJR 20, and give 16 and 17 year olds a chance to vote. All of our voices must be heard on issues that affect all our futures.

Thank you,

Em Bookstein