

HB3206. Chair fahey, vice chairs breese-iverson and kropf, and members of the committee.

As a current 17-year-old, I think back on the moment when I pre-registered to vote as a 16-year-old in the State of Oregon. I could not wait to take that step closer towards being a more direct contributor to American democracy and a more active civic citizen. Yet even though I was taking a step in the positive direction to that voting milestone, I couldn't help but think: "I should be able to vote right now." I can drive, I have held multiple jobs, and I have had to pay taxes. I'm just as mature as an 18-year-old. Every morning before school I read trusted news sources, and every night I sit down with my family to watch the news for an hour. I am just as informed as an 18-year-old. I am actively involved in Next Up, national get out the vote campaigns, and political candidate phone banks. I am just as civically engaged as an 18-year-old. These same principles remain true for many of my peers as well.

In general, there are three main reasons why I believe that the voting age should be lowered in school board elections. First, there is clear science conducted by Laurence Steinberg of the American Psychological Association that the cold cognition, or calm decision making, that voting uses is equally as developed in an 18-year-old as a 16-year-old. Second, school board elections fundamentally and very directly affect the lives of 16 and 17-year-olds. As upperclassmen and older members of their school community who have a personal understanding of the needs of the community, they deserve the right to vote on who represents them. Third, and finally, it is critical that 16-year-olds develop the habit of voting while they are not in the midst of a tumultuous period of transition either going to college or starting full-time jobs. Also, while not all 16 and 17-year-olds are as educated as one would like in a voter, the same is true for many adults who are given the right to vote. Ultimately, voting is a social good, something that we want young people to take part in.

My age group deserves the fundamental democratic right to vote and to have a voice in the matters affecting our nation, affecting our own lives. I want to devote myself to ensuring that the generation of 16-year-olds to come will be able to click that "register to vote" button knowing they will be able to vote in the next election, knowing they will be able to use their voice. Please support HB3206.