

Hoa Nguyen
State Representative
District 48



OREGON HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Testimony in Support of HB3206

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

In addition to serving in the State Legislature, I am serving my first term on the David Douglas School Board, so I ran that campaign fairly recently. I was so disheartened to learn on that campaign how dismal turnout for School Board Elections. The National School Boards Association cites “discouragingly low” voter turnout rates, often in the 5% to 10% range. Yet, for more than 50 million children in the American public school system, many decisions about their education fall to school boards, making the role of a school board member an important one with heavy consequences.

Those of us who serve on school boards are tasked with making decisions that have lasting effects on students’ and families’ lives; we have a say in students’ curriculum, the schools’ budgets, public health policies, after school programs, transportation plans, and much more. The COVID 19 pandemic gave us even more decision-making power. And during the debates on if, when, and how to close and reopen schools, while we all heard plenty from politicians, parents, teachers, administrators, etc, the one voice that was glaringly absent from the discourse was that of the students, the very people we were trying to make these decisions for.

There is no reason for this status quo to change, until the students who must live with the decisions we make, have a say in who is making these decisions for them. Giving them the opportunity to vote in local School Board Elections will make them active participants in their own futures. Additionally, a lower voting age would make civics education more effective as a means of providing students a way to directly apply what they’re learning in the classroom in their communities, adding a crucial level of relevance to civics courses.

I know we all want what is best for our children; giving 16 and 17 year olds the vote in School Board Elections is what is best. I’m proud to support Rep Bowman on HB3206.

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