

February 23, 2023

Re: Support for HJR 20 - Youth Vote Bill

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

Firstly, I would like to thank you for this opportunity to give testimony in strong support of HJR 20, the Youth Vote Act. My name is Jesse Weeg and I'm a father and graphic designer. I support this bill, because the choices we make today will have the most impact on our young people. Issues like climate change, the economy, privatization of resources, and policing are some of the things that are going to affect young people more than the rest of us, as they'll be having to grapple with our decisions long into the future. Climate change is a very real concern with regards to youth voting. Currently we have 70 and 80 year olds deciding policy about climate change, when these folks will not bear the brunt of our inaction in the years following. Young people have their skin in the game much more than any of us and it is crucial that we include their voices.

16 and 17 year olds are already included in many crucial aspects of our system. They can work, pay taxes, drive, serve in the military, and be tried as adults in our criminal justice system, so it only makes sense that they are represented in how this system moves forward and serves their needs. Getting young people involved in civic action at a younger age can cement that engagement and keep them involved throughout their life.

Through the last few decades we have chosen policies that have made it more and more difficult for young people to get a foothold in our society. From increasing college tuition costs to unlivable minimum wage and increasing home prices, we are clearly lacking the representation of those who are most impacted by these policies. Please vote yes on HJR 20, and give 16 and 17 year olds a chance to vote and share their voice during this crucial time in our history.

Thank you,
Jesse Weeg
SE Portland