

Hello Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and esteemed members of the joint standing committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs. My name is Alex Wu, and I am a Scarborough High School Senior, and also a member of the Vote16 USA Youth Advisory Board. I support LD1446.

Today I am not here to talk about the countless scientific research that supports 16 year olds voting. I won't mention how 16 years old already have developed enough to hold the skills for rational decision-making while not under pressure, otherwise known as hot cognition. I won't mention how voting at 18 artificially discourages young voters because of transitions to the military, college, and the workforce. Instead I'm here to talk about the excitement that 16 years have at the possibility of participating in our democracy.

Yesterday I asked my friends and club members to write testimony for lowering the voting age. Each and every one of them was excited and emboldened by this possibility. They didn't think it was possible for the voting age to be lowered, or that who could vote could change in our time. Each and every one of them already has their own projects that have improved our local community. They've run community service projects to help parents navigate our school's paperwork, and served on our school board to represent youth voices. They've run annual voter registration drives to help their peers. And despite all of their engagement, they are not able to vote.

Many of my peers are discouraged by our government. They think they don't have a voice because adults don't listen to them. Many of them don't think voting matters because they believe our representatives don't care about them.

In some ways, they are correct. Lots of legislators don't care about the voices of those who can't vote. My friends have been turned away from conversations before because they are not the ones voting people into office. We youth use our voices constantly though. We're always striving to improve our communities. We just need to be given the chance. We want to talk about issues of poverty, inflation, housing, and education. We want to talk to you about the issues that directly affect them, but have no voice to speak about. We have the vision, we have the passion, but we don't yet have the power. Youth have valuable insight to provide to lawmaking built on the education provided to us from our elders.

I end with a quote from Dr. Angela Davis. "If youth stand on our shoulders, they can see farther than us." We admire and respect all the adults that have made our lives what they are today. We respect you, our parents, our teachers, our lawmakers. We only hope that you, our mentors, will be able to let go and allow us to teach you things too. Youth are informed and ready to engage.