



Testimony in Support of House Bill 5883, An Act Concerning Voting For Municipal Officers And On Local Questions

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Vote16CT is a nonpartisan organization that seeks to increase civic engagement among younger generations and create a population of educated and active voters through the expansion of voting rights to 16 and 17-year-olds in municipal elections.

Chairwoman Flexer, Chairman Fox, Vice-Chairs Haskell and Thomas, Ranking Members Sampson and Mastrofrancesco, and distinguished members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee:

H.B. 5883 represents a crucial step in raising voter turnout rates in the State of Connecticut. We have seen in recent years that lowering the voting age to 16 has benefitted the turnout rates of young people across multiple municipalities in states such as Maryland, as well as a handful of countries around the world. For example, in Scotland, when the voting age was lowered to 16, 75% of registered voters aged 16 and 17 showed up to the polls while only 54% of those aged 18-24 did so ([Bergh and Eichhorn](#)). The same happened in Takoma Park, Maryland, which was the first city in the

United States to lower its voting age to 16. In the first election where they could vote, the turnout rate of 16 and 17-year-olds was over 30% higher than that of the general population ([Vote16USA](#)).

One's first vote is critical toward increasing long-term turnout as research shows that individuals who vote in their first election are likely to remain habitual voters, whereas those who do not, are likely to remain habitual nonvoters. In fact, voting in one election can increase the probability that a person will vote in the next election by 25 percent ([Vote16USA](#)). At age 18, most people are either going off to college or entering the workforce, a significant change in their lifestyle causing voting to fall toward the bottom on their list of priorities. At 16-years-old, people are typically in a more stable position and more likely to vote when they are first able to, which as stated above, significantly increases the likelihood of them becoming lifelong, educated, and active voters.

In addition, 16 and 17-year-olds work, pay taxes on their income, and are affected by the decisions of elected officials today and for the rest of their lives, on issues such as education policy, public works projects, climate change, and so much more ([Vote16USA](#)). Ensuring that their voices are represented when decisions are being made that will affect their present and future is of utmost importance. Sixteen and 17-year-olds are also at the forefront of many issues facing the world today. We have seen high school students around the nation and the world become leaders in the climate change and gun control movements, like Emma Gonzalez, one of the student leaders of Never Again MSD. This past year, we also witnessed many students of color working toward racial equity and justice throughout the nation. Their hard work and dedication must be heard at the ballot box.

There has also been plenty of research that shows that students are well equipped to vote. Numerous social scientists have proved that 16-year-olds are mature enough and

have the capability to cast an independent and educated vote. They possess the cold cognitive ability to make informed decisions, including voting, which is a low stress situation made by ourselves with time to deliberate and reason logically ([Laurence Steinberg](#)).

There is no denying that 16- and 17-year-olds are active enough, smart enough, and mature enough to vote and participate in government. They have already demonstrated their power and capabilities in pushing society forward, and they should be granted the right to vote at the local level. Vote16CT implores the distinguished members of the committee to vote in favor of H.B. 5883.