

Catherine Benton
HB 1178
January 13, 2025

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of House Bill 1178.

My name is Catherine Benton, and I am writing to express my strong support for this bill. HB 1178, which mandates school districts to adopt a policy allowing qualified student electors to leave campus to vote in elections, is a crucial step towards fostering civic engagement and ensuring the active participation of our young citizens in the democratic process.

First and foremost, this bill empowers students by recognizing their right to vote and making it more accessible. By allowing students to leave campus to vote in general, special, or primary elections, we are removing barriers that may prevent them from exercising their constitutional right. This is especially important for young voters who are often first-time participants in the electoral process and may face challenges in finding time to vote outside of their school commitments.

Moreover, HB 1178 encourages the development of lifelong voting habits. Research has shown that individuals who vote in their first eligible election are more likely to continue voting in future elections. By facilitating student voting, we are fostering a culture of civic responsibility and engagement that will benefit our society as a whole.

Additionally, this bill promotes equity and inclusion by ensuring that all eligible students, regardless of their socioeconomic background, have the opportunity to vote. Many students may lack access to reliable transportation or may have work and family obligations that make it difficult to vote outside of school hours. By allowing them to leave campus to vote, we are ensuring that all voices are heard and represented in our elections.

In conclusion, I urge you to vote YES on HB 1178. This bill represents a significant step towards empowering our young citizens, fostering civic engagement, and promoting a more inclusive and equitable society. Let's support our students and strengthen our democracy by making voting more accessible for all.

Thank you for considering this testimony.

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