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COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY AND HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

MONDAY, March 22, 2021, 2:15 p.m., Via Videoconference

HCR 63/HR 52 URGING THE COMMISSION TO PROMOTE AND ADVANCE CIVIC EDUCATION TO CONDUCT A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF THE FEASIBILITY AND IMPLICATIONS OF LOWERING THE VOTING AGE FOR STATE AND LOCAL ELECTIONS FROM EIGHTEEN TO SIXTEEN YEARS OF AGE

TESTIMONY

Janet Mason, Legislative Committee, League of Women Voters of Hawaii

Chair Nakashima, Vice Chair Matayoshi and Committee Members:

The League of Women Voters of Hawaii supports HCR 63/HR 52, that would require the State Commission to Promote and Advance Civic Education to conduct a feasibility study concerning the prospect of lowering the voting age for state and local elections to sixteen years of age.

To us, this resolution is compelling, because a major improvement in historically low youth turnout seems to be underway among young voters of both major political parties. In the 2020 presidential election 52-55% of eligible people ages 18-29 voted.¹ League hopes this high turnout could be sustained to keep younger citizens engaged in the voting process, for voting is a habit that can be acquired early in life.

The 26th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution guarantees voting rights only for those who are 18 years of age or older. Nevertheless, having a reliable study about 16- and 17-year-olds voting in Hawaii's state and county elections could go a long way to advancing suffrage for these young people and probably garnering more support.

The League has previously supported preregistration for 16- and 17-year-olds. If this occurred, County Clerks would need to flag voter registration records to indicate these people would not yet be eligible to vote in Federal elections. This would require certain investment, but the population of sixteen- and seventeen-year-old people in Hawaii is relatively small. Also, more 16 and 17-year-olds than older voters do not yet have a driver's license, but other forms of identification are acceptable under our state's voter registration laws. Likewise, a modified ballot that does not include Federal races would need to be available for voters under 18.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

¹ <https://circle.tufts.edu/latest-research/election-week-2020#youth-voter-turnout-increased-in-2020>



To: The House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs (JHA)
From: Sherry Pollack, 350Hawaii.org
Date: Monday, March 22, 2021, 2:15pm

In strong support of HCR63/HR52

Aloha Chair Nakashima, Vice Chair Matayoshi, and members of the JHA Committee,

I am Co-Founder of the Hawaii chapter of 350.org, the largest international organization dedicated to fighting climate change. On behalf of our 6,000 members and supporters, 350Hawaii.org **strongly supports HCR63/HR52** that urges the Commission to Promote and Advance Civic Education to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the feasibility and implications of lowering the voting age for state and local elections from eighteen to sixteen years of age.

Expanding the voting age makes good sense. Studies show adolescents in this age range are developmentally ready to vote. In fact, other municipalities in the U.S. have already lowered their voting age. Moreover, our youth shoulder the consequences of the decisions our politicians make. They're the population most affected. They deserve a political voice.

A wealth of data supports the wisdom of enfranchising young voters. It is a misconception that 16 and 17-year-olds lack the capacity to vote. The argument that certain groups of people lack the knowledge or maturity to vote has been used throughout history. It is important to remember that in this country the vote originally was only extended to white land-owning men. The subsequent expansions of voting rights to what exists today, and that many now take for granted, were bitterly opposed at the time they were proposed. In hindsight, these expansions were all clearly moral and necessary.

Conducting a comprehensive analysis of the feasibility and implications of lowering the voting age for state and local elections is an important effort that should be supported. Please pass HCR63/HR52!

Mahalo for this opportunity to testify on this very important resolution.
Sherry Pollack
Co-Founder, 350Hawaii.org



Young Progressives Demanding Action
P.O. Box 11105
Honolulu, HI 96828

March 22, 2021
2:15PM

TO: House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs
RE: Testimony in Support of HCR63/HR52

Aloha Chair Nakashima, Vice Chair Matayoshi, Members of the House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs,

My name is Jun Shin. I am a Junior at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, and currently serve as an at-large board member for the Young Progressives Demanding Action (YPDA). YPDA advocates for public policies that reflect the values of young people throughout the State of Hawai'i. YPDA is in **SUPPORT** of **HCR63/HR52**, which urges the Commission to Promote and Advance Civic Education to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the feasibility and implications of lowering the voter age for state and local elections from the current age of 18 to 16.

While YPDA prefers a bill that will actually lower the voting age, rather than a non-binding resolution, we are hopeful that this resolution will begin the conversation needed to build political and public support for lowering the voting age to 16. We are hopeful that the Commission to Promote and Advance Civic Education will understand that allowing 16 year olds to vote can be very positive to the community. When high schoolers are taking civics, it will not simply be just another class. There will now be a real world application in the form of voting, and curriculums can be built around helping students to understand the issues and the decisions they'll be making. Once we help 16 year olds start to vote early, it'll become a positive habit that they will carry on for the rest of their lives.

It's also important to point out that there are 16 year olds already taking on, or having the potential to take on what can be perceived as "adult responsibilities". Why is suffrage not one of them? Currently in the State of Hawai'i, 16 year olds are in a legal position to drive and get married, even taxes are not limited to age as well. Politicians whom 16 year olds can't even vote for, will determine how the money they as workers pay in taxes gets spent. YPDA strongly believes that this is inherently unfair and undemocratic.

We request for you to pass **HCR63/HR52** out of your committee for full consideration by the House of Representatives. Please expand access to the political process.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Jun Shin,
Board Member At-Large
Young Progressives Demanding Action (YPDA)
Cell: 808-255-6663
Email: junshinbusiness729@gmail.com
CC: action@ypdahawaii.org



Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs

Pō'ahā, Malaki 22, 2021

Via Wikiō

Ke Kapikala Moku'āina

415 South Beretānia Street

Re: HCR 63/HR 52 - URGING THE COMMISSION TO PROMOTE AND ADVANCE CIVIC EDUCATION TO CONDUCT A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF THE FEASIBILITY AND IMPLICATIONS OF LOWERING THE VOTING AGE FOR STATE AND LOCAL ELECTIONS FROM EIGHTEEN TO SIXTEEN YEARS OF AGE

Aloha Luna Ho'omalua Mark M. Nakashima, *Hope Luna Ho'omalua* Scot Z. Matayoshi, and members of the House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs.

The Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs **SUPPORTS** HCR 63/HR 52. These resolutions urge the Commission to Promote and Advance Civic Education to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the feasibility and implication of lowering the voting age for local elections to sixteen and to submit a report to the Governor and the Legislature prior to the 2022 legislative session. At its 60th annual convention, the Association adopted resolution 2019-24, urging the State of Hawai'i to extend the voting franchise to eligible residents aged sixteen and seventeen to support a culture of civic engagement.

Hawai'i faces a crisis of civic engagement and ranks 48th in the nation in voter turnout. Voting is a habit and a person's first election is critical to establishing that habit. In fact, voting in one election can increase the probability that a person will vote in the next election by over fifty percent. Evidence from cities, counties, and countries that have lowered the voting age supports the argument that the age of sixteen is a better time to start the habit of voting than eighteen. Sixteen and seventeen year-olds work and pay taxes on their income, can drive, and in some

cases, are tried in adult courts. Lowering the age of enfranchisement is fair and will create a culture of voting in our state, eventually leading to higher turnout among all age groups.

Researching and understanding the potential positive impacts of lowering the voting age is an important first step towards enacting a policy of sixteen year-old voting. Thus, the Association respectfully urges the Committee to **PASS** HCR 63/HR 52.

The civic club movement was founded in 1918 by Congressional Delegate Prince Jonah Kūhiō Kalanianaʻole with the creation of the Hawaiian Civic Club; the Association was formally organized in 1959 and has grown to a confederation of over sixty (60) Hawaiian Civic Clubs located throughout the State of Hawaiʻi and the United States. The Association is the oldest Hawaiian community-based grassroots organization. The Association is governed by a 16-member Board of Directors; advocates for improved welfare of Native Hawaiians in culture, health, economic development, education, social welfare, and nationhood; and perpetuates and preserves language, history, music, dance and other Native Hawaiian cultural traditions.

Mahalo for allowing us to share our *mana* ʻo.

Me ka ʻoia ʻi ʻo,

Hailama Farden
Pelekikena

ASSOCIATION OF HAWAIIAN CIVIC CLUBS

A RESOLUTION

No. 2019 -24

URGING THE STATE OF HAWAI'I TO EXTEND THE VOTING FRANCHISE TO ELIGIBLE RESIDENTS AGED SIXTEEN AND SEVENTEEN TO SUPPORT A CULTURE OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

WHEREAS, the Hawaiian Civic Club movement was founded in 1918 by Congressional Delegate Prince Jonah Kūhiō Kalaniana'ole with the creation of the Hawaiian Civic Club; and

WHEREAS, the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs was formally organized in 1959 and has grown to a confederation of over 60 Hawaiian Civic Clubs located throughout the State of Hawai'i and the United States; and

WHEREAS, Prince Kūhiō, as the embodiment of the values of the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs, began his civic life at a young age, and at seventeen he represented the Kingdom of Hawai'i as a diplomat to Japan, and he continued to serve with honor and distinction throughout his life; and

WHEREAS, only 52.7 percent of registered voters cast ballots during Hawai'i's 2018 general election; and

WHEREAS, according to the United States Elections Project, since 1986, young voters aged 18 to 29 have had the lowest tendency to vote of any age demographic, and in 2018, just 32.6 percent of young voters cast ballots, compared to 45.8 percent for voters aged 30 to 44, 56.2 percent for voters aged 45 to 59, and 65.5 percent for voters age 60 and older; and

WHEREAS, according to *Lowering the Voting Age for Local Elections in 2017 and Beyond, Generation Citizen, Ver. 2.0 – Jan. 2017*, voting is a habit and a person's first election is critical to establishing that habit, and evidence from cities, counties, and countries that have lowered the voting age supports the argument that the age of 16 is a better time to start the habit of voting than 18; and

WHEREAS, the same article indicates voting in one election can increase the probability that a person will vote in the next election by over fifty percent and that shows that early voting experiences are an important determinant of future voting behavior; and

WHEREAS, 16- and 17-year-olds work and pay taxes on their income, can drive, and in some cases, are tried in adult courts; and

WHEREAS, seventeen nations have implemented policies of sixteen and seventeen-year-olds voting in some or all elections, including Argentina, Austria, Brazil, Cuba, Ecuador, Germany, Indonesia, Malta, Nicaragua, Norway, Scotland, and Sudan; and

WHEREAS, Takoma Park, Hyattsville, and Greenbelt in Maryland have lowered the voting age to 16 for local elections, and Berkeley, California, has lowered the voting age to 16 for school board elections; and

WHEREAS, extending the voting franchise to Hawai'i residents aged sixteen and seventeen in local elections statewide coupled with programs like robust civic education at the high school levels will likely increase the civic engagement of young people and help to instill a culture of voting, eventually leading to higher turnout among all demographics.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs at its 60th Annual Convention in Lahaina, Maui, in the malama of Welehu and the rising of Lā'au Pau, this 16th day of November 2019, urging the State of Hawai'i to extend the voting franchise to eligible residents aged sixteen and seventeen to support a culture of civic engagement; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that a certified copy of this resolution be transmitted to the Governor of the State of Hawai'i, President of the State Senate, Speaker of the State House of Representatives, Chair of the State Senate subject matter committee on Hawaiian Affairs, Chair of the State House subject matter committee on Hawaiian Affairs, Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, and all County Mayors.



The undersigned hereby certifies that the foregoing Resolution was duly adopted in the malama of Welehu and the rising of Lā'au Pau on the 16th day of November 2019, at the 60th Annual Convention of the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs in Lahaina, Maui.



Hailama V. K. K. Farden, President



Young Democrats of Hawai'i

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Trish La Chica
President

Danicole Ramos
Vice-President

Keoni Williams
Secretary

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America National
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Kathryn Kelly
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**Communications and
Digital Director**

Cameron Deptula
Legislative Liaison

Kaleo Chang
**Policy and Research
Director**

March 21, 2021

House Committee on Judiciary & Hawaiian Affairs

Aloha Chair Nakashima, Vice-Chair Matayoshi, and Members of the Committee:

The Young Democrats of Hawai'i (YDHI) **supports HCR63/HR52**, which would urge the Commission to Promote and Advance Civic Education to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the feasibility and implications of lowering the voting age for state and local elections from eighteen to sixteen years of age.

YDHI is a caucus under the Democratic Party of Hawai'i. Our mission is to increase the political strength of our members by providing opportunities for civic engagement, political advocacy, and participation in the Democratic Party of Hawai'i.

YDHI recognizes the importance of promoting active youth involvement in political discourse and civic engagement. As such, we are supportive of efforts to research the potential effects of lowering the voting age to sixteen years of age in state and local elections. Local research into this topic can help determine what effects, if any, lowering the voting age will have on key issues such as community engagement with state and local government, and voter participation. Importantly, the findings of such a study will also help settle a long standing debate over an issue that directly impacts many of our members. Therefore, we believe this is a topic that should be explored further, and should be studied extensively, as this resolution urges.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this resolution, and we urge you to pass HCR63/HR52 to study the feasibility and implications of lowering the voting age to sixteen years of age.

Sincerely,
The Young Democrats of Hawai'i

HR-52

Submitted on: 3/21/2021 1:58:31 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/22/2021 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
David Mulinix	Our Revolution Hawaii	Support	No

Comments:

STRONG SUPPORT!

HR-52

Submitted on: 3/20/2021 2:47:18 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/22/2021 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Barbara Best	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Let's get a study of this bill which could increase voting

HR-52

Submitted on: 3/21/2021 12:57:33 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/22/2021 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Caroline Kunitake	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Dear Chair Nakashima, Vice Chair Matayoshi and Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs,

Please support HR 52.

We need more people to vote to strengthen our democracy. We need to allow our younger citizen an opportunity to vote.

Studies have shown that voting is a habit, which develop over repetition and can become strongly ingrained if developed early. See <https://thehill.com/opinion/campaign/456934-how-voting-becomes-a-habit>.

Knowing that voting is habit which starts when young, a comprehensive analysis by the PACE Commission, as urged by HCR 63 / HR 52, will be able to assist with determining the feasibility and implications of lowering the voting age for state and local elections from eighteen to sixteen years of age to promote long-term and sustained civic engagement, leading to a strong and vibrant democracy.

Mahalo,

Caroline Kunitake

HR-52

Submitted on: 3/22/2021 2:13:05 PM

Testimony for JHA on 3/22/2021 2:15:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Present at Hearing
Christopher Edwards	Individual	Support	No

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Vice Chair, and committee members,

Aloha Chair, Vice-Chair, and committee members,

I support HR 52/ HCR63. I encourage your support for a feasibility study on lowering the voting age in our state to 16 years old. Voting is a habit that is better picked up at 16 when additional years of relevant high school education in civics can occur. Many 18 to 29 year-olds do not vote because they aren't in the habit, don't quite know how it impacts them, and various other reasons. Youth enjoy practical and relatable experiences, and voting between ages 16 and 18 would give them practical experience in democracy. First-time voting is something that should come at an earlier age. Lowering the voting age will give them an incentive to learn and exercise the tools necessary to participate in our republic. More of our citizenry will find the tools they need like writing, speaking out, researching, asking questions of elected officials, forming coalitions, and finding strength in their voice and the work of their cohort. With significant local to global challenges like climate change, budget choices, community health concerns like COVID-19, inequity in education consequences mounting, we need 16 to 18-year-olds to come up to speed quickly and stay involved. If we lower the age to vote to 16, our education system would be reenergized by students excited about democracy just like it was by students coming out of schools in the 1940s and 1950s. Those of us over 18 would be happy to have those 16 to 18 join us in the voting citizenry. We need all the help, perspective, diversity, and representation of ideas we can to improve decisions and directions in our community. We may overcome these critical challenges in our lives today. We can do it together as we have always done before.

Please support HR 52/ HCR63.

Mahalo,

Christopher Edwards
Honolulu, HI 96822