

Statement Before The
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
Wednesday, March 17, 2021
10:00 AM
Via Videoconference and Conference Room 309

in consideration of
SB 550, SD1
RELATING TO VOTING.

Chair McKELVEY, Vice Chair WILDBERGER, and Members of the House Government Reform Committee

Common Cause Hawaii provides comments on SB 550, SD1, which (1) allows an individual who is seventeen years of age but will be eighteen years of age on or before the next general election to register and vote at the primary election immediately preceding that general election and in any co-occurring or intervening special election and (2) takes effect upon ratification of an appropriate constitutional amendment.

Common Cause Hawaii is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, grassroots organization dedicated to reforming government and strengthening democracy through voting modernization efforts that increase civic engagement, voter turnout, and voter participation in our democratic processes.

Studies have shown that voting is a habit, which develop over repetition and can become strongly ingrained if developed early. SB 550, SD1 will allow people to vote starting at age seventeen. SB 550, SD1 is an important bill to allow young people to vote and continue to vote their entire lives, leading to a strong and vibrant democracy. "We do not have government by the majority. We have government by the majority who participate." Thomas Jefferson.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on SB 550, SD1. If you have further questions of me, please contact me at sma@commoncause.org.

Very respectfully yours,

Sandy Ma
Executive Director, Common Cause Hawaii



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

March 13, 2021

TO: HOUSE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
RE: Testimony in support of SB550 SD1

Dear Representatives,

Young Progressives Demanding Action (YPDA) **supports** SB550 SD1, which would fix a small loophole in our current policy of allowing 17-year-olds who will turn 18 by the general election to begin the process of participating in our democratic process by registering early.

In creating this policy, the state recognized that allowing teens who will be 18 years old by the general election to register early increases the likelihood that they will vote. The state further recognized that this increase in civic participation among young people is a benefit to society.

However, currently a 17-year-old that turns 18 before the general election, but whose birthday happens to fall between the primary election and general election, cannot vote in the primary election. This bill, in conjunction with SB551, closes this loophole by allowing these 17-year-olds to fully take part in the election process—including the primary.

Particularly in Hawai'i, which is close to a single-party state, the primary election is incredibly important and often offers a more diverse set of choices between stances on issues. Some county races are also decided in the primary alone if no runoff is triggered. It makes no sense to bar this group of teens from half the election process.

Encouraging participation in democracy through voting, as well as through this legislative process, is a good thing. Studies show that the earlier a person begins participating in civics—the act of taking ownership over and responsibility for the society in which we live—the more likely that person is to remain a lifelong active citizen and participant in democracy.

That kind of participation is an integral and sustaining force within a system of democracy. Archibald MacLeish, who served as Congressional Librarian under F.D.R., and was the first chief of the Office of Facts and Figures, famously said: “Democracy is never a thing done. Democracy is always something that a nation must be doing.” MacLeish said that in 1939 in response to Nazi propaganda that, he recognized, was already targeting the United States and doing harm to our democracy a full two years before we officially entered World War II.

History repeats itself. Today, we are again seeing a rise in white supremacy and fascism around the world. And once again, the spread of this hate is fueled by propaganda. Our democracy is still under threat from the corrosive effects of this toxic disinformation. Millions of people around the world, including here in Hawai‘i, believe in a web of dangerous Internet conspiracy theories that has seeped into the real world and become a terrifying and self-replicating simulacrum.

The best, and only, defense against this threat is to make our government transparent, accountable, and accessible. Give young people a chance to take ownership over their futures. Welcome them into the legislative and democratic process. Trust them to act responsibly when given the truth. They will not let you down.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Will Caron
Board President & Secretary, 2020–2021
action@ypdahawaii.org



Testimony with COMMENTS on
SB550 SD1 and SB551 SD1 Relating to Lowering the Voting Age

Aloha Chair McKelvey, Vice-chair Wildberger, and members of the GVR Committee,

My name is Dyson Chee, I am 19 years old, and I am testifying on behalf of Vote16HI. Vote16HI is a coalition of youth, adult allies, and organizations that support lowering the voting age to 16 in Hawai'i.

We would like to provide comments on both SB550 SD1 and SB551 SD1, which would lower the voting age to 17 for primary elections and any intervening or co-occurring special election immediately preceding the general election, so long as that individual turns 18-years-old on or before the next general election.

One of the primary goals of lowering the voting age is to give high schoolers the opportunity to vote at least once before they graduate. There are studies which show that people develop habits at a young age, closer to the age of 16 rather than 18. In addition, it is common knowledge that voting is habitual. In Hawai'i, because our elections occur every two years, in order to achieve this goal, mathematically speaking, the voting age needs to be lowered to 16. Since the population of Hawai'i residents who will turn 18 between the primary and general election is a miniscule fraction of the population, most students will still never have the opportunity to vote while in high school.

However, we still greatly appreciate the intent behind SB550 SD1 and SB551 SD1 in expanding the right to vote, and we hope that it will be extended to 16-year-olds as many other nations and municipalities have done so already. By lowering the voting age to 16 rather than 17, every high schooler in Hawai'i will have the opportunity, should they choose it, to vote at least once and build that positive habit of voting before they leave for the chaos of college.

Thank you for your consideration and mahalo for the opportunity to testify,
Dyson Chee, Vote16HI



KE ONE O KĀKUHIHEWA

O'ahu Council of the
Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

Pō'akolu, Malaki 17, 2020

Via Wikiō

Ke Kapikala Moku'āina

415 South Beretānia Street

Re: SB550/SB551 - RELATING TO VOTING/PROPOSING AN AMENDMENT
TO ARTICLE II, SECTION 1, OF THE HAWAII STATE CONSTITUTION TO
CHANGE THE AGE QUALIFICATION FOR VOTING IN STATE OR LOCAL
ELECTIONS

Aloha Luna Ho'omalua Angus McKelvey, Hope Luna Ho'omalua Tina Wildberger, and members of the House Committee on Government Reform.

Ke One O Kākuhihewa **SUPPORTS** the intent of SB550/SB551. This bill and corresponding constitutional amendment proposes to allow an individual who is seventeen years of age but will be eighteen years of age on or before the next general election to register and vote at the primary election immediately preceding that general election and in any co-occurring or intervening special election.

At its 60th annual convention, the Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs, for which we are a member, 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 we consistently rank last 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 16 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. This bill and constitutional amendment is a step in the right direction.

BENTON KEALII PANG, PH.D.
HAWAIIAN CIVIC CLUB OF
HONOLULU
PELEKIKENA

JACOB KA'ŌMAKAOKALĀ AKI-
KING KAMEHAMEHA HCC
HOPE PELEKIKENA

GEORGIANA NAVARRO-
MĀKAHA HCC
HOPE PELEKIKENA 'ELUA

LEATRICE KAUAHI-HCC OF
HONOLULU
PU'UKŪ

ROTH PUAHALA -KING
KAMEHAMEHA HCC
PELEKIKENA IHO NEI

TERI LOO-KO'OLAUPOKO HCC
KĀKAU 'ŌLELO

CHRISTINE "CHRISSEY" ANJO-
PEARL HARBOR HCC
HOLE KĀKAU 'ŌLELO

'AHAHUI SIWILA HAWAII O
KAPOLEI
KALA HOLDEN

ALI'I PAUAHI HCC
KEHAULANI LUM

'EWA-PU'U'LOA HCC
MARLEEN KAU'I SERRAO

HCC OF HONOLULU
ANITA NAONE

KAILUA HCC
MAPUANA DE SILVA

KALIHI-PĀLAMA HCC
JUANITA BROWN
KAWAMOTO

KING KAMEHAMEHA HCC
LETANI PELTIER

KO'OLAULOA HCC
RANAE "TESSIE"
FONOIMOANA

KO'OLAUPOKO HCC
ROCKY KALUHIWA

LUALUALEI HCC
SHIRLINE HO

MĀKAHA HCC
LUANN LANKFORD-
FABORITO

MAUNALUA HCC
ROSE KITTY SIMONDS

NA LANI 'EHA HCC
R. KELANI RAMOS

NĀNĀIKAPONO HCC
JAYCINE HICKS

PAPAKŌLE'A HCC
KEALII LUM

PEARL HARBOR HCC
ANTOINETTE LEE

PRINCE KŪHIŌ HCC
A. MAKANA PARIS

PRINCESS KAHANU HCC
DREANA KALILI

PRINCESS KAI'ULANI HCC
RUSTY RODENHURST

QUEEN EMMA HCC
RAWLETTE P. KRAUT

HCC OF WĀHIAWA
NOELANI DEVINCENT

HCC OF WAIALUA
MAKALAPUA CASSON-
FISHER

WAI'ANAE HCC
CYNTHIA ENRIQUEZ

WAIKIKI HCC
DWYNN KAMAI

HCC OF WAIMĀNALO
LOUANA KAIO

Thus, Ke One O Kākuhihewa respectfully urges the Committee to **PASS SB550/SB551.**

Ke One O Kakūhihewa is a native Hawaiian council made up of 24 civic clubs on the island of O'ahu. Our oldest member, Hawaiian Civic Club of Honolulu was established by Prince Jonah Kūhiō Kalaniana'ole on December 7, 1918.

Sincerely,



Benton Kealii Pang, Ph.D.



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



Committee on Government Reform

Pō‘akolu, Malaki 17, 2020

Via Wikiō

Ke Kapikala Moku ‘āina

415 South Beretānia Street

Re: SB550/SB551 - RELATING TO VOTING/PROPOSING AN AMENDMENT TO ARTICLE II, SECTION 1, OF THE HAWAII STATE CONSTITUTION TO CHANGE THE AGE QUALIFICATION FOR VOTING IN STATE OR LOCAL ELECTIONS

Aloha Luna Ho‘omalu Angus McKelvey, Hope Luna Ho‘omalu Tina Wildberger, and members of the House Committee on Government Reform.

The Association of Hawaiian Civic Clubs **SUPPORTS** the intent of SB550/SB551. This bill and corresponding constitutional amendment proposes to allow an individual who is seventeen years of age but will be eighteen years of age on or before the next general election to register and vote at the primary election immediately preceding that general election and in any co-occurring or intervening special election.

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 we rank 48th in the nation in voter turnout. Solving this problem starts with empowering young people to take their place at the political table. Allowing seventeen year-olds who will be eighteen and eligible to vote in a given general election, to also cast ballots in the preceding primary, will ensure our newest voters have an equitable say in their first elections. The primary process is particularly important in deciding

electoral outcomes in Hawai'i. In 2018, for example, 47 races were already decided by the time the primary concluded, nearly half of the 104 offices on the ballot that year. This simple administrative fix recognizes that the primary and the general are inseparable parts of the same cycle. The proposed constitutional amendment is fair and will help create a culture of voting in our state, eventually leading to higher turnout among all age groups.

Thus, the Association respectfully urges the Committee to **PASS SB550/SB551**.

The civic club movement was founded in 1918 by Congressional Delegate Prince Jonah Kūhiō Kalaniana'ole 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 Hawai'i 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* 'o.

Me ka 'oia 'i 'o,



Hailama Farden

Pelekikena

SB-550-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/12/2021 3:22:18 PM

Testimony for GVR on 3/17/2021 10:00:00 AM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Present at Hearing |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Mike Goljuch, Sr. | Individual | Support | No |

Comments:

I support SB550.