



**Testimony of Kimberly McCullough, Legislative Director  
In Support of HB 2948  
House Committee on Rules  
March 16, 2017**

Chair Williamson and Members of the Committee:

The American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon<sup>1</sup> supports HB 2948, which would allow persons who are at least 16 years of age to register to vote. As a nonpartisan organization dedicated to preservation and enhancement of civil liberties and civil rights, the ACLU of Oregon supports efforts that promote access to the ballot and protect the fundamental right to vote.

Voter registration is one of the biggest barriers to voting. While some states are trying to make it harder to vote, Oregon has been a leader in honoring the right to vote by increasing access to the ballot. Since 2007, Oregon has allowed 17-year-olds to preregister to vote. This bill would allow the approximately 20,000 16-year-olds who visit the DMV every year to apply for their driver's licenses to preregister to vote in the same trip, which would likely have the largest impact on rural voters.

Research shows that when young people engage in the democratic process, they are more likely to remain active, engaged voters into adulthood. According to a 2010 study of Hawaii and Florida, states that allow persons who are at least 16 years of age to register to vote, preregistration increases youth turnout rates by about 4.7 percent above other registrants.<sup>2</sup> In addition, preregistration increases turnout rates by about 5.5 percent for youth of color. Preregistration can also be an effective method for registering non-college students to vote, who have registration rates of 18 percent lower than college students.

Currently, ten states and the District of Columbia allow preregistration for 16 year olds. Preregistration policies in several of those states, including Louisiana and Florida, passed with bipartisan support. States that allow preregistration for 16 year-olds demonstrate that there is little to no cost to implement these policies, and therefore, Oregon can easily integrate pre-registration into existing systems.

For these reasons, the ACLU of Oregon urges you to support HB 2948.

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<sup>1</sup> The American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon (ACLU of Oregon) is a nonprofit organization with more than 37,000 members in the State of Oregon, and that number is growing as we speak.

<sup>2</sup> McDonald, M. P. and M. Thornburg (2010). Registering the youth through voter preregistration. NYUJ Legislation and Public Policy 13, 551.