

Communication from Public

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Council File No: 18-0467

Comments for Public Posting: Dear Los Angeles City Councilmembers, I am writing to you today to support City Council Ordinance 18-0467 and the proposed benefits it would bring to youth voters all across the City of Los Angeles. Ordinance 18-0467, or more specifically the proposed Section 22.814, would allow 16-year-olds to uniformly be able to vote in all neighborhood council elections while additionally enabling the creation of a youth board seat that anyone aged 14-17 can run for, with residents as young as 14 being allowed to vote for that seat specifically. Considering the current climate where the youth are driving change on numerous issues--including gun control, global warming, and police reform to name a few--this ordinance comes at the perfect time to help engage and cultivate an entirely new generation of lifelong voters. Research has shown that when given the right to vote, 16-year-olds are more likely to start voting habits young, and as a result of these habits are more likely to vote in elections as an adult (Plutzer, E., 2002). Furthermore, there is a correlation between the child of a parent being able to vote and that parent being more likely to vote, as they feel pressured to set an example for their voting child (Dahlgaard, J., 2018). By passing this ordinance enabling teenagers to be participants in their local body of government, you are providing many students with the opportunity to be directly involved in politics at a young age, fostering these lifelong voting habits and creating voters for decades to come. This benefits our democracy, as with a larger share of the population voting and participating in politics, our government becomes more representative of the perspectives and views of the people it is intended to serve. Additionally, in giving the right to vote and participate in local neighborhood politics to students, an entirely new perspective on our neighborhoods and how younger individuals interact with the built environment now becomes available for public discourse. Different age groups use community resources, such as commercial corridors or parks, differently. For example, older age groups may use a park for strolling around or talking with friends, while younger age groups, such as those named in this proposal, are much more likely to be using a park for active uses such as sports and skateboarding. Or in a commercial corridor, older age groups may use different businesses such as sit-in restaurants or accounting services, while

younger groups will use fast food joints and specialty clothing stores. Point being, neighborhood councils control the direction of community spaces and the uses that are permitted there, so by including younger voices in the conversation, thereby making sure that all the different ways people use public spaces are accounted for, we are creating better public spaces for all users and improving the quality of life for everyone. Many parallels can be drawn between today's era of seismic change enabled by mass participation of the youth and what we saw in the 60s with the civil rights and anti-war protests that marked the end of the decade. It was only after tireless work from young student activists and organizers, among others, did the Vietnam War end and the Civil Rights Act pass. We have seen that when the youth rise up to participate in our American Democracy they facilitate real change at all levels of government. Recognizing the considerable activism we have seen from adolescents in these past few years and the substantial changes they have brought about as a result of their activism, it is clear that, much like the 26th Amendment passed in 1971 giving 18-year-olds the right to vote nationwide, extending the right to vote and participate in local government to the politically active youth of today is the next logical step in helping Los Angeles progress into the future. I urge the Council to support City Council Ordinance 18-0467 for the betterment of our communities and young people across the city. This message was written by I Am A Teen Voter, a non-profit dedicated to increasing youth civic engagement across the state of California, and personally sent by a supporter of the youth civic engagement movement. Thank you for your consideration.