

BERKELEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Resolution 16-055 in Support of Proposed Charter Amendment to Lower Voting Age to 16 for School Board Election

WHEREAS voting is the cornerstone of California's democracy. Yet in the most recent 2014 midterm elections, only 36 % of eligible voters actually cast a ballot, which marked a 72-year low. Only 20% of 18-29 year olds voted in the 2014 midterms, the lowest youth turnout rate ever recorded.

WHEREAS California has taken some important steps to address the challenge of low civic engagement and voter turnout (e.g., automatic voter registration for anyone with a California Driver's License and pre-registration for 16- and 17-year-olds to vote), it is clearly not enough.

WHEREAS two municipalities in the United States allow 16- and 17-year-olds to vote: Takoma Park and Hyattsville, Maryland. The results from these cities are very encouraging. For instance, after Takoma Park lowered its voting age for the 2013 election, turnout among 16- and 17-year-olds was higher than any other age group.

WHEREAS the international evidence is just as compelling. In Norway, more than 20 municipalities lowered their voting age to 16 on a trial basis for the 2011 election. The result was that turnout of 16- and 17-year-olds was much higher than first-time voters ages 18-21. Other countries such as Brazil, Ecuador, Argentina, Nicaragua, Germany, Scotland, Hungary and Austria all have gone forward with letting 16- and 17-year-olds vote in local, state, and/or national elections.

WHEREAS enabling 16- and 17-year-olds to vote will increase voter turnout (especially among young voters), give young adults the ability to truly influence the direction of their local schools, increase civic engagement among young adults, and provide a strong incentive to improve civics education.

WHEREAS San Francisco has placed a charter amendment on the November 2016 ballot to lower the voting age to 16 for all local elections.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Berkeley Unified School District urges the City of Berkeley to place a charter amendment on the ballot that would lower the voting age to 16 for school board elections in Berkeley.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the School Board supports a charter amendment similar in substance to the draft charter amendment attached to this

APPROVED AND ADOPTED, this 15th day of June, 2016.

Judy Appel, Clerk
Board of Education