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Board of Education Joins the Growing List of Advocates in Support of Expanding Voting Rights to 16 and 17 year olds

*Historic Vote in Favor of the Vote 16 Follows Major Endorsements by State
Senator Mark Leno and Assemblymember David Chiu*

San Francisco, CA-- In a historic night filled with excitement as over 100 students packed the room to voice their support for greater civic participation opportunities, the San Francisco Board of Education joined a growing list of endorsers of the effort to expand voting rights to 16 and 17 year olds in municipal and school board elections in San Francisco Tuesday night after taking a unanimous vote to back the initiative.

The [resolution](#), "In Support of the Political Enfranchisement of 16 and 17 year olds for Local Elections" was sponsored by Board of Education Commissioners Matt Haney, Sandra Lee Fewer, and Rachel Norton.

Other big names in Bay Area politics are also throwing their weight behind the initiative: State Senator Mark Leno, Assemblymember David Chiu, City College Trustees Alex Randolph and Brigette Davila, Public Defender Jeff Adachi, and BART Board member Nick Josefowitz. Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi announced her general support for efforts to lower the voting age in late 2015. The voting age charter amendment is under consideration by the Board of Supervisors and is sponsored by Supervisors John Avalos, Jane Kim, Eric Mar, and David Campos.

"San Francisco is our home too. We should have a say on what goes on in our communities," said 17 year old Balboa High School Senior Shara Orquiza. "We've never been given an opportunity to take direct action on issues we care about until this initiative came around. Young people like me are experiencing a rapidly changing San Francisco and we deserve to have a say in the direction of our city." Orquiza says she was first inspired to participate more in the political process after taking an Ethnic Studies course at her high school.

Following a series of low-turnout elections in San Francisco, youth leaders are striving to boost civic participation by removing barriers that impede young people from having a voice in shaping their future. Research shows that voting is habit-forming, and that the earlier someone starts voting, the more likely they are to become a lifelong-voter.



"By giving 16 and 17 year old students a chance to vote for the first time before leaving high school, we can prepare them to participate fully in civic life and empower them to have an equal say in our schools and our city. 16 and 17 years olds should be able to cast their first vote here in San Francisco where they have roots, are engaged with school and family, and are deeply invested in local issues." said Matt Haney, Board of Education President and sponsor of the resolution.

The effort is part of a nationwide movement to increase civic participation among 16 and 17 year olds, as well as young voters under 30. Two cities in Maryland have already passed similar policies and similar legislation is currently under consideration in Washington D.C. If approved, San Francisco would be the first major city to include 16 and 17 year olds in local elections.

The charter amendment that would expand voting rights to 16 and 17 year olds is sponsored by Supervisors John Avalos, Jane Kim, Eric Mar, and David Campos and is currently endorsed by:

State Senator Mark Leno
Assemblymember David Chiu
San Francisco Unified School District Board of Education
San Francisco Youth Commission
San Francisco Unified School District Student Advisory Council
Public Defender Jeff Adachi
City College Trustee Alex Randolph
City College Trustee Brigette Davila
The San Francisco Juvenile Justice Commission
The Harvey Milk LGBT Democratic Club
San Francisco Latino Democratic Club
SFUSD Peer Resources Youth Council
The Mix at SFPL Board of Advising Youth
San Francisco Citywide Transitional Age Youth Advisory Board
Generation Citizen
Youth Leadership Institute
San Francisco Youth Empowerment Fund
Lavender Youth Recreation and Information Center
Bay Area Community Resources/CHALK: Youth Funding Youth Ideas
Sunset Neighborhood Beacon Center
National Youth Rights Association
San Jose State University Human Rights Working Group
FairVote
CivicMakers