



July 26, 2022

To: Members of the US Senate  
From: Virginia Kase Solomón, CEO  
Re: Youth Voting Rights Act

The League of Women Voters of the United States urges you to pass S.4500, the *Youth Voting Rights Act*, to benefit our democracy by supporting equal access to the ballot. Our democracy is strongest when every voice is heard, including those of our young voters. The League strongly supports this legislation to make voting more accessible for young voters by breaking down obstacles they continue to face when registering to vote or casting a ballot. We must equip young voters with the necessary resources to fully participate in the democratic process if we want to create strong and engaged citizens.

The *Youth Voting Rights Act* further enshrines the promises of the 26<sup>th</sup> Amendment in law and into practice. The 26<sup>th</sup> Amendment was ratified over 50 years ago, yet there remain barriers for eligible young voters to cast a ballot- barriers that are unique to young voters on account of their age. The proposed legislation would respond to the specific challenges to voting that young people often experience – challenges that remain despite the promises made in the 26<sup>th</sup> Amendment. In fact, the result of these challenges, without sufficient federal legislation to protect the youth vote, is the denial and abridgment of the vote on account of age- which is strictly prohibited by the 26<sup>th</sup> Amendment.

Specifically, the bill would create a variety of protections for young voters, including pre-registration options for future voters aged 16 and 17, offices for voter registration and polling places at all public institutions of higher education, state requirements to accept student IDs as compliant voter identification for federal elections, and codification of the right to vote from a college domicile without durational residency requirements.

The bill also works to extend provisions in the *National Voter Registration Act* to higher education institutions by ensuring they are designated voter registration agencies. This means that college students will be given the opportunity to register to vote when they register for classes or conduct other business on campus. Further, it requires that states accept student IDs as an acceptable form of identification when voting in states which require proof of identification to vote. We know that lack of acceptable identification is a huge barrier for students wishing to vote where they go to school and where key decisions are made about their education and their lives. Allowing students to use their student IDs to prove their identification will only help to increase participation and break down barriers that youth voters face when trying to vote.

Youth voting has been on the rise since 2018. According to data from CIRCLE, youth voter turnout has doubled every election year since 2018. Despite this growth in youth voter turnout, this community still faces challenges registering to vote and accessing the ballot box. These barriers must be removed to extend the freedom to vote equally to all eligible voters regardless of age. The *Youth Voting Rights Act* accomplishes this purpose. The League of Women Voters strongly urges you to assist in its passage.