

Steven Sepe

From: Sara V <saravieira803@hotmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 10, 2026 8:35 AM
To: House State Government and Elections Committee
Subject: Oppose H 7091

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Sara Vieira and I am from Coventry.

While 16-year-olds are capable in many areas—such as driving or holding part-time jobs—the right to vote demands a level of maturity, life experience, and independent judgment that most individuals at that age simply have not yet developed. Neuroscience research shows that the prefrontal cortex, which governs impulse control, long-term planning, and weighing consequences, continues major development well into the late teens and early twenties. This is not a matter of intelligence, but of neurological and emotional readiness for one of democracy's most serious responsibilities.

Sixteen-year-olds are still legally minors in nearly every meaningful context: they cannot drink alcohol, smoke, gamble, enter binding contracts without parental consent, or serve in the military without permission. Society recognizes that they need protection and guidance for high-stakes decisions. Granting the vote at 16 would be inconsistent with these safeguards and could expose young people to intense political pressure and manipulation before they have formed stable, independent worldviews.

Most 16-year-olds remain heavily influenced by parents, peers, schools, and social media echo chambers. Many have limited real-world exposure to taxes, mortgages, employment challenges, or the long-term impacts of policy choices. Civics knowledge among high-school students is often weak, and voting requires more than enthusiasm—it requires the ability to critically evaluate complex trade-offs affecting an entire nation.

The current age of 18 aligns with the age of majority, when people gain full legal adulthood and greater personal independence. Keeping the voting age at 18 preserves the integrity of our electoral system while still allowing young people to participate as soon as they reach that threshold and is stated within the RI State Constitution (only 18 years or older can vote in RI).

Thank you,
Mrs. Sara Vieira