



CITY OF NEW YORK
**MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD
FOUR**

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JESSICA CHAIT
Chair

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March 14, 2024

Hon. Robert C. Carroll
New York State Assembly member
416 7th Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11215

Hon. Brad Hoylman-Segal
New York State Senate
322 8th Avenue, Suite #1700
New York, NY 10001

Hon. Tony Simone
New York State Assembly
214 West 29th Street, Suite 1401
New York, NY 10001

Re: Vote16 Project

Dear Senator Hoylman-Segal, Assemblymember Simone, and Assemblymember Carroll

At Manhattan Community Board 4's (MCB4) regularly scheduled meeting on March 6, 2024, the Board voted 30 in favor, 5 opposed, 1 abstaining, and 0 present but not eligible to vote in support of lowering the voting age to 16 for State and municipal elections in the State of New York.

On February 12, 2024, at our regularly scheduled Arts, Culture, Education, and Schools (ACES) committee meeting, we heard from Vote 16 NYC/NYS, a grassroots organization advocating for greater civic involvement among 16 and 17 years old by allowing them to vote in state and local elections. Senator Brad Hoylman-Segal's bill (S2562), pending in the NYS Senate, would amend Section 1 of Article 2 of the New York State constitution to allow all persons sixteen years of age or older to vote in state and local elections.

Additionally, City Council Resolution No. 723 is calling on the New York State Legislature to pass, and New York State voters to approve, the S2562 bill.

Expanding the NYS voting age to include 16 and 17-year-olds will promote equal representation and inclusion. While 16 and 17-year-olds are affected by the decisions made by elected officials, they are excluded from the democratic process solely due to their age. By granting them the right to vote, we acknowledge their contributions as active members of society and affirm their stake in the future of our communities. Benefits of lowering the NYS voting age include:

1. Giving voice to young people many of whom are employed. In 2021, the average rate of employment in the U.S. for 16 and 17-year-olds was 26.9%.¹ While employed 16 and 17-year-olds contribute to federal, state, and local taxes, they currently have no say in political representation, how their tax dollars are being spent, and/or issues related to their education, health care, the environment, etc.
2. Civics will be mandated in high school. Part of NYS Senate Bill S S2562 requires that high school students receive at least 8 classes of civics education. The Board of Regents will provide high schools with Voter Registration forms and Voter Registration Opt Out forms to students 16 years and older to be completed in class.
3. Increase voter participation in NY state and local elections. In the last Mayoral election, only 21% of registered New Yorkers voted. Expanding voting rights to include 16 and 17-year-olds will increase overall voter participation.
4. Introducing civics at an earlier age will create better voting habits. According to an article in the Rutgers Law Review, research indicates that lowering the voting age to sixteen increases voting participation among youth and establishes long term habits of electoral engagement.² By allowing 16 and 17-year-olds to vote, we can instill a sense of civic responsibility and empowerment from an early age, strengthening our democracy in the long run.

Finally, research has shown adolescents aged 16 and above are capable of making informed and reasoned decisions, including those related to civic participation and voting. The George Washington Law Review states that, “turning eighteen (the current voting age in most places) is a volatile time in people’s lives, when they are leaving home for the workforce or college and are often mobile; sixteen-year-olds, by contrast, are more rooted in their current community, uniquely knowledgeable about local issues, and just as intellectually competent as an eighteen-year-old to select their leaders.”³ The research

¹ <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2022/06/21/after-dropping-in-2020-teen-summer-employment-may-be-poised-to-continue-its-slow-comeback/>

² https://rutgerslawreview.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/08_Wray-Lake_Oosterhoff.pdf

³ <https://www.gwlr.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/85-Geo.-Wash.-L.-Rev.-1039.pdf>

highlights that cognitive, emotional, and social development during adolescence and having knowledge about local issues equips young people with the necessary skills and competencies to engage meaningfully in the electoral process.

As members of a Community Board where the minimum age to become a voting board member was lowered to 16-year-olds in 2014, we believe that extending the right to vote to 16-year-olds is not only just but beneficial for our democracy and city. We believe that supporting NYS Senate Bill S2562 will recognize the capabilities and rights of young people and enrich our democracy by ensuring that it is truly representative and inclusive of all citizens.

Sincerely,



Jessica Chait
Chair
Community Board 4



Matt Green
Co-Chair
ACES Committee



Josephine Ishmon
Co-Chair
ACES Committee

CC: Hon. Linda B. Rosenthal, New York Assembly
Hon. Adrienne Adams, Speaker, City Council
Hon. Mark Levine, Manhattan Borough President
Hon. Erik Bottcher, City Council
Hon. Gale A. Brewer, City Council