

Letter in support of lowering the voting age to 16 in Cheverly town elections

The undersigned Cheverly organizations strongly support the proposal to lower the voting age in Town of Cheverly elections to age 16. Collectively, our organizations work for equal rights, active civic engagement and learning from our history. One key to creating that informed, engaged, and active citizenry is working to expand voting access and participation in elections and decision-making at the local level. When it is difficult for groups to participate fully in civic affairs, the voices of the disenfranchised are lost and the decisions are skewed towards the needs of those with greater access.

We, therefore, strongly support expanding voting rights in town elections to all 16 and 17 year olds. We encourage the town council and Mayor to take action on this issue as soon as possible for all of the following reasons:

- There is a national movement to restrict access to voting and we should be actively opposing that by expanding the franchise where appropriate
- 16 and 17 year olds are asking to be more involved and this is a great way to encourage the next generation of active residents
- Many 16 and 17 year olds work and pay taxes and therefore should have a say in how that tax money is spent
- Voter turnout, especially in local elections is abysmally low among 18-25 year olds. By engaging young voters while they're still in high school and connected to their community, we could re-shape voter participation and increase political engagement
- Brain science is clear that the development needed to participate in elections is formed by age 16, giving those residents the skills to help make important decisions about the direction of their community
- Cities and towns across the country, including some in Prince George's County, have already taken this action and have found only positive effects

For all these reasons, we support lowering the voting age to 16 in Cheverly town elections and call on the Mayor and Council to take such an action as soon as possible. We then call on the town to begin discussions on how to effectively work with local schools and teen leaders to create systems to educate these new voters and further involve them in local government.

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