



*The League of Women Voters of Oregon, established in 1920, is a grassroots nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. We envision informed Oregonians participating in a fully accessible, responsive, and transparent government to achieve the common good. LWVOR Legislative Action is based on advocacy positions formed through studies and member consensus. The League never supports or opposes any candidate or political party.*

February 18, 2025

To: [Chair Prozanski](#), [Vice Chair Thatcher](#), and  
Members of the [Senate Judiciary Committee](#)

Re: [SB 548](#) – Relating to Minimum Age for Marriage is 18 – Support

This bill would increase the minimum age for marriage in Oregon from 17 to 18. This is consistent with the position of the League of Women Voters which supports policies at all levels of the community and government that promote the well-being, encourage the full development and ensure the safety of children. These include child abuse/neglect prevention and teen pregnancy prevention.

Child marriage is [recognized as a human rights violation](#) that disproportionately harms girls. It disrupts education, increases the risk of domestic abuse, and has serious health consequences, including higher rates of depression, sexually transmitted infections, cervical cancer, and maternal mortality. The children of underage parents are also at greater risk for poor birth outcomes, including neonatal death.

In *Montgomery v Louisiana* (2016) the Supreme Court noted that minors are vulnerable to negative influences, pressure from family and peers, have limited control over their environment and in many cases cannot remove themselves from dangerous settings. This reasoning is directly applicable to underage marriage.

[Research confirms](#) that brain development continues into the mid-20's, making young individuals more susceptible to coercion and poor decision-making. Allowing marriage before 18 increases the risk that minors—who have limited legal rights—are pressured into unions without full consent.

According to Oregon law, upon marriage, an individual is considered an emancipated adult. Here, too, the implications of the transition are significant. [Emancipated adults](#) are responsible for their own financial, social and psychological wellbeing. Parents are no longer legally obligated to support their children. While emancipated minors are responsible for their own medical insurance coverage and other expenses, they are subject to the adult criminal justice system. These are serious consequences.

For these reasons, the League urges passage of SB 458. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.

Handwritten signature of Lisa Bentson in black ink.

Lisa Bentson  
President LWVOR

Handwritten signature of Patricia Garner in black ink.

Patricia Garner  
Reproductive Health Portfolio