

June 20, 2019

State Senator Barry Finegold  
Joint Committee on Election Laws  
24 Beacon St, Room 507  
Boston, MA 02133

State Representative John Lawn  
Joint Committee on Election Laws  
24 Beacon St, Room 443  
Boston, MA 02133

### **In Support of S.396/H.636 & H.685**

Committee Chairs Finegold and Lawn, and Members of the Joint Committee on Election Laws,

I am a longtime resident of Massachusetts and am proud of our state's long history of leadership for democracy. Now is the time for us again to step up.

Despite the pride most feel about our country, America has had a long and shameful history of voter suppression that continues today. Few of us grasp that our country still ranks 56th in the world on measures of electoral integrity, including voting systems, as ranked by the Electoral Integrity Project based at Harvard. I ask this committee to help America move beyond this shameful history and ranking.

One way to move forward is with Election Day Registration. Democracy that works for all must encourage the participation of all and ensure that every eligible vote cast is counted. Thus, measures that reduce barriers to the ballot box and protect the accuracy of registration rolls are essential.

We often hear the expression "time is money." Those who have more money have more time, and that includes for such tasks as getting registered to vote. By reducing the time required by voters to be enabled to vote, EDR makes our elections fairer, more democratic.

EDR has proven to increase voter turnout. In fact, the six states with the highest voter turnout in the United States are also those that have EDR. None of the worst-performing states have it.

EDR is one important piece of a range of democracy reforms being pursued throughout our country, in a movement led by Americans from all walks of life. This democracy movement is making significant strides to redress our nation's history of voter suppression and strengthen our democratic institutions. For example, in the midterm elections last fall it succeeded in passing reforms in 18 states, cities and one county. We in Massachusetts must do our part to carry that momentum forward and ensure that every eligible Bay Stater who wants to participate in an Election is counted.

Thank you for your leadership and urge you to pass Election Day Registration.

Frances Moore Lappé

(I am cofounder of the Small Planet Institute in Cambridge and have written several books on democracy, most *recently Daring Democracy: Igniting Power and Meaning and Connection for the America We Want* co-authored with Adam Eichen.)