

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:

In recent decades, many states have adopted reforms intended to protect the ability of citizens to vote. In Massachusetts, you recognized the importance of such laws – passing online voter registration in 2014 and automatic voter registration last summer. I commend your commitment to securing the vote.

Yet, barriers to, and inequalities in, voter participation persist in Massachusetts and nationally (where wealthier Americans are more than 65 percent more likely to vote than low-income citizens). Election Day Registration is an important reform for addressing this gap in voting in particular. I urge you to support Election Day Registration as the next step for democracy in the Commonwealth.

I am a political scientist who studies political inequality—and what we can do about it. My research on election laws shows that across many different electoral reforms, it is Election Day registration that has demonstrated the greatest potential to make American democracy more equal. With my colleague Melanie Springer, I examined patterns of voting before and after changes in various state electoral laws. We were able to look at the way different reforms affect balance of voter turnout between the rich and poor.

Our research shows that Election Day registration is the primary strategy states have to help eliminate the registration barrier, reduce income bias in voting, and bolster participation in elections by low-income communities. Replacing two separate steps, registering and voting, with one trip to the voting place makes a real difference for low-income citizens—promoting a more representative electorate.

To date, 21 other states have passed Election Day registration, recognizing its potential to make participation in elections more equal and ensure that low-income Americans have a voice in our democracy. It is time to bring this critical reform to the Commonwealth.

Please support Election Day Registration and make Massachusetts the next state to adopt Election Day registration.

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