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June 8, 2017

The Honorable Anne Gobi  
Senate Chair, Joint Committee on Election Laws  
State House, Room 513  
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable John Mahoney  
House Chair, Joint Committee on Election Laws  
State House, Room 443  
Boston, MA 02133

**Re: Automatic Voter Registration**

Dear Chairwoman Gobi and Chairman Mahoney:

I am writing to express my support for legislation pending before the Joint Committee to create a system of automatic voter registration. Automatically registering eligible citizens to vote will help reduce barriers to participation and make elections more accessible to all.

Voting rights are civil rights. The right to vote is at the heart of our democracy. We must protect the integrity of our elections and ensure that the ballot is fully accessible to all eligible voters. In Massachusetts, we have made great progress in expanding access and improving voter participation—most recently with online voter registration, pre-registration, and the implementation of the early voting law. Automatic voter registration is an important next step.

Under our current system, citizens are given the opportunity to register to vote when they get or renew a drivers' license, either in person or on-line, and when they interact with a number of state benefits agencies or military recruitment offices. With a system of automatic voter registration in place, every eligible citizen who interacts with the Registry of Motor Vehicles or other state benefits agencies will be automatically registered to vote, unless they choose not to participate.

Nationally, one in four eligible citizens is not registered to vote. Here in Massachusetts, almost 15% of voting age citizens are unregistered. That's approximately 680,000 eligible citizens who either never registered or who moved and dropped off the rolls after failing to re-



register at their new address. Although these would-be voters may update their address with various state agencies, such as the Registry of Motor Vehicles, that information does not always make its way to the registration file. Automatic voter registration would alleviate this problem by ensuring that information is shared and voter registration is updated accordingly. Rather than making our citizens navigate the system for themselves, government can share the work.

By automatically registering eligible citizens to vote, we make it easier for them to engage and participate in the electoral process. This makes our elections more accessible to all—particularly to young people, those who move frequently, and minority voters. Six other states have adopted automatic voter registration systems. Massachusetts should be next.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express my support for legislation before the Joint Committee to establish election day registration. Like automatic voter registration, allowing eligible voters to register at the polls on election day would further remove barriers and help make our election process more open and accessible.

I support both automatic voter registration and election day registration as important efforts to increase voter registration and participation in elections. I also encourage you to solicit the important perspectives of state agencies and local elections officials. I welcome an opportunity to work with the Legislature as you consider your options.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Gabrielle Viator, Senior Policy Advisor, at (617) 963-2601.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Maura Healey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline.

Maura Healey

cc: The Honorable Cynthia Creem  
The Honorable Peter Kocot