



Joint Committee on Election Laws
June 20, 2019
Testimony of Attorney General Maura Healey
(As prepared for delivery)

Good afternoon, Chairman Finegold, Chairman Lawn, and members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today.

I'm here to express my support for *An Act Relative to Election Day Registration*.

Thank you to the sponsors, Senator Creem and Representatives Malia and Benson, for their leadership on this important legislation.

And my thanks to Secretary Galvin for your commitment to strengthening voting rights in Massachusetts.

I also want to recognize the work of the Election Modernization Coalition, including the ACLU, the League of Women Voters, Common Cause, MassPIRG, MassVOTE, Lawyers for Civil Rights, Massachusetts Voter Table, Progressive Massachusetts and the MIRA Coalition, many of whom are here today in support of Election Day Registration.

My message today is simple: Voting rights are civil rights.

The right to vote is at the heart of our democracy. We must work to reduce barriers to participation in our elections and ensure that the ballot is fully accessible to all eligible voters.

Election Day Registration has a proven, 40-year record of increasing participation in U.S. elections.

Twenty-one states have successfully adopted Election Day Registration and it's now time to make this happen in Massachusetts!

We've all seen what's happening across the country. Early voting hours rolled back, college students barred from participating where they live, polling locations in communities of color closed down by the dozens, all to make sure that not everyone participates.

Here in Massachusetts, we have a chance to write a different story – one that strengthens our democracy and where everyone has the chance to participate.

That's why moving to Election Day Registration is so important.

In Massachusetts, 15% percent of eligible adults can't vote for one reason: they simply aren't registered.

That's over 780,000 voting-age adults in our state whose voices aren't heard on Election Day.

The result is unmistakable: fewer people of color, low-income residents, renters, and young people participating in the process.

The rules also prohibit tens of thousands of voters from fixing minor problems with their registration when they go to vote.

This leads to thousands of provisional ballots that are cumbersome and expensive for election officials, and often never get counted.

The good news is that we have an answer: Election Day Registration works!

By increasing participation among people who wouldn't otherwise be able vote, we'll be taking a stand against the apathy and frustration that makes thousands of people opt out of the system all together.

How many of us have knocked on a door late on election day, and heard a person say, "I just moved here," or "I'm not registered" and felt in that moment like we had missed an opportunity to include someone?

This is our chance.

Massachusetts has made great progress with the implementation of Early Voting in 2016 and passage of Automatic Voter Registration last year.

With Election Day Registration, we can build on that momentum to increase voter participation and make our democracy stronger.

I want to thank our local election workers for their willingness to take this on and thank the Committee for your consideration.

Thank you.