



**Testimony in support of
S.741/H.1214 An Act committing to higher education the resources
to insure a strong and healthy public higher education system
Submitted to the Joint Committee on Higher Education
By Susan Loffredo, LWVMA Higher Education Specialist
April 30, 2019**

Massachusetts is known for its outstanding universities and the highly-educated knowledge workers whose skills drive our economy. And yet, the Commonwealth spends less on public higher education as a share of its economy than all but five other states. In fact, public higher education funding in Massachusetts has steadily decreased since 2001. During that same period, tuition and fees have increased to make up the difference, and student debt has skyrocketed. Programs are cut or understaffed, class sizes increase, and students drop out because they can't afford the cost.

S.741/H.1214 directly addresses these problems. The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts, representing 47 local Leagues across the state from the Berkshires to Cape Cod, supports this bill for that reason.

The League has long held that public higher education must be "strengthened and extended if the needs of the Commonwealth's young people are to be met." As early as 1959, the League conducted a study of public higher education to identify the issues relevant to the League's legislative priorities. For example, this study made clear that community college programs were essential in training students in particular skills needed by Massachusetts employers, and so these programs gained our support. Since then, the League has been actively involved in supporting or opposing administrative and governance changes, and has been steadfast in promoting the importance of equality of access to public education.

Affordable, high-quality public higher education benefits everyone: the students whose earning potential will be increased, the employers who will have enough highly-qualified applicants, and the Commonwealth, gaining taxpayers and thriving businesses.

With the League's deeply-held commitment to public higher education, in addition to our strong support of equality of opportunity in education and employment, we urge the joint committee to report this bill favorably and in a timely manner. Thank you for the opportunity to present our position.