



Testimony submitted to the Joint Committee on Election Laws
In Support of H.684/S.387 An Act relative to early voting in the 2020 presidential primary,
H.681 An Act to extend early voting for all elections, and
S.397 An Act relative to early voting privacy and expansion
By Linda Freedman, LWVMA Specialist on Elections and Voting
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The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts supports all three of these bills to expand early voting in the Commonwealth.

We support early voting as a means to make voting easier and more convenient for more people and to increase voter turnout. Early voting has proven popular with voters in the 2016 and 2018 general elections. It should be expanded to all state and primary elections.

Senator Creem's bill, S.397, and Rep. Livingstone's and Rep. Vargas' bill, H.681, would expand early voting to all biennial state elections and primaries and to the presidential primary. Our preference is for this broad expansion of early voting.

If a bill proposing a general expansion of early voting to all elections will not be reported out of committee and passed by the legislature before the March 2020 presidential primary election, we would urge the legislature to enact H.684/S.387, proposed by Sen. Chandler and Rep. Mahoney, extending early voting specifically to the March 2020 presidential primary *as an interim measure* but not as the only action on early voting this session.

In drafting a comprehensive expansion of early voting, we suggest the committee consider the provision in S.397 to permit early voting ballots to be deposited directly into a ballot box or vote tabulator. That provision would remove the requirement for voters to place their ballot in an envelope to be counted on Election Day and eliminates the problems associated with that step—poll workers having to open all those envelopes on a busy day, and, because the ballots were folded, the tendency for the tabulating machines to jam on the folded paper. We encourage you to consult with election officials to determine if this provision would improve the process of early voting.

LWVMA also supports the provision in H.681 to allow pre-registered teens who will be eligible to vote in a general election to also vote in the primary election preceding that general election, since primary elections are often where the actual winner of an election is chosen.

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts, representing 47 local Leagues from Cape Cod to the Berkshires, urges this committee to report favorably a bill expanding early voting to all state elections—general and primaries—and presidential primaries. We will enthusiastically support that bill.

Thank you for your consideration.