



Thursday, July 2nd 2020

Dear Governor Baker:

One of the most important pieces of legislation of the year, H.4820, An Act Relative to Voting Options in Response to COVID-19, is awaiting your signature. This legislation will help keep elections safe and accessible, and to ensure voter confidence this fall in the face of threats posed by COVID-19. We urge you to sign it swiftly.

This legislation has been months in the making. After the outbreak of COVID-19 in March, we recognized the urgency of preparing for fall elections during a pandemic. Thanks to the leadership and support of members of the Legislature, particularly Election Laws Committee Chairs John Lawn and Barry Finegold, this legislation contains best practices for expanding mail voting and protecting in-person voting options. We extend our sincerest gratitude to those legislators who have advocated for and shepherded this bill through the legislative process.

In the months since, we have continued to learn from other states that held primary elections. One of the most important lessons from those states - like Wisconsin and Georgia - is that the changes in this bill take time to implement, and without adequate preparation the reforms entailed in this bill could be rendered moot. Our elections officials need to prepare for a surge in mail ballots and applications, and they will need all the time available to recruit and train adequate poll workers so that poll closures do not create an additional barrier to Bay Staters participating in our elections. It is therefore imperative that you sign this bill into law quickly.

The legislation before you will expand early voting options and make it easier to vote by mail in Massachusetts. All registered voters will automatically receive a mail ballot application for both the September state primary and the November general election. The Secretary of the Commonwealth is also charged with establishing an online portal so voters can request a mail ballot online. In addition, the bill offers protections for in-person voting, and will expand in-person early voting for the November general election and implement it for the first time for the September primary. There are important provisions to assist local elections officials with their work as well.

The first ballot application mailing is slated to go out July 15, in just two weeks. Without your swift action, this deadline will be difficult to meet.

We know that many other important issues – including the outbreak of COVID-19, the resulting fiscal crisis, and the need for racial justice – require your immediate and ongoing attention. We appreciate your leadership over the past months. We urge you to act decisively to address one more challenge: preserving safety and access for voters during our fall elections.

Signed,

Pam Wilmot, Common Cause Massachusetts  
Rahsaan Hall, ACLU of Massachusetts  
Janet Domenitz, MASSPIRG  
Cheryl Clyburn Crawford, MassVOTE  
Patricia Comfort, League of Women Voters of Massachusetts  
Beth Huang, Massachusetts Voter Table

Tim Foley, 1199SEIU Massachusetts  
Josh Young, Action for Boston Community Development  
Marvin Martin, Action for Equity  
Beth Kontos, American Federation of Teachers-MA  
Jeff Clements, American Promise  
Rosario Ubiera-Minaya, Amplify Latinx  
Tanisha Arena, Arise for Social Justice  
Priscilla Flint-Banks, Black Boston COVID19 Coalition  
Cheryl Clyburn Crawford, Black Directors' Network  
Larry Banks, Black Economic Justistic Institute  
Rev. David Wright, Black Ministerial Alliance of Greater Boston, Inc.  
Spencer Brown and Eve Seitchik, Boston Democratic Socialists of America  
Nia Evans, Boston Ujima Project  
Lisa Boehm, Laura Kerper, Lesley Benson, co-founders of BAND, Bridge Action Network for Democracy (BAND)  
Phyllis Neufeld, Burlington Democratic Town Committee  
Sovanna Pouy, Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association of Greater Lowell, Inc.  
David J. Harris, Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice  
Gladys Vega, Chelsea Collaborative  
Lisa Owens, City Life Vida Urbana  
Rev. June Cooper, City Mission, Inc.  
Yun-Ju Choi, Coalition for a Better Acre  
Deb Fastino, Coalition for Social Justice  
Gail Latimore, Codman Square NDC  
Madeline Hertz, Democratic Policy Center  
Elizabeth Henry, Environmental League of Massachusetts  
Adam Eichan, Equal Citizens  
Katrinia Shaw, Freedom House  
Louis Elisa, Garrison Trotter Neighborhood Association  
Samuel M. Gebru, Generation Citizen Massachusetts  
Charlene Greene, Greater Boston Section-National Council of Negro Women

Carla Cooper, Indivisible Martha's Vineyard  
Debbie Paul, Indivisible Mass Coalition  
Laurie Veninger, Indivisible Outer Cape  
Nadeem Mazen, Jetpac  
Cindy Rowe, Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action  
Aaron Agulnek, Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston  
Sophia Hall, Lawyers for Civil Rights  
David A. Bryant, MA Association of Community Development Corporations  
Javier Gutierrez, Madison Park Development Corporation  
Tristan Grieve, March For Our Lives: Massachusetts  
Michael Kane, Mass Alliance of HUD Tenants  
Thomas Callahan, Massachusetts Affordable Housing Alliance  
Cassandra Bensahih, Massachusetts Against Solitary Confinement  
Eva A. Millona, Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition  
Andrea Burns, Massachusetts Peace Action  
Celia J. Blue, Massachusetts Women of Color Coalition  
Emily Ruddock, Executive Director, MASSCreative  
Phillip Kassel, Mental Health Legal Advisors Committee  
Sue Swanson, Mothers Out Front  
Juan M. Cofield, NAACP- New England Area Conference  
Tanisha Sullivan, NAACP-Boston Branch  
Rebekah Gewirtz, National Association of Social Workers, MA Chapter  
Maria Elena Letona, Neighbor to Neighbor Massachusetts  
Noemi Ramos, New England United for Justice  
Brian Miller, Nonprofit Vote  
Zac Bears, PHENOM  
Mehreen Butt, Planned Parenthood  
John Lippitt, Progressive Democrats of Massachusetts  
Russell Freedman, Progressive For Democracy in America  
Fred Van Deusen, Reclaim Our Democracy  
Filipe Zamborlini, Rosie's Place  
Shana Bryant, Shana Bryant Consulting Services  
Deb Pasternak, Sierra Club Massachusetts Chapter  
Frances Moore Lappé, Small Planet Institute  
Anika, Somerville Democratic City Committee  
Fredie Kay, Suffrage 100MA  
Michael Chen, Sunrise Movement Boston  
Mark Haidar, The Equal Democracy Project at Harvard Law School  
Shahara Jaghoo, The Women's Pipeline for Change  
Aziza Robinson-Goodnight, Transformative Culture Project

Horace Small, Union of Minority Neighborhoods  
Keith Motley, Urban League of Eastern Massachusetts  
Vote New Bedford  
George Pillsbury, Voter Choice for Massachusetts 2020  
Nicole Forbes, Women's Bar Association of MA  
Isabel Gonzalez-Webster, Worcester Interfaith  
Lezlie Braxton Campbell, Young Democrats of Massachusetts  
Eva Martin Blythe, YWCA Cambridge  
YWCA Malden  
Jordan Latham, YWCA Southeastern Massachusetts