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 Pouv, 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
Katrina 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