



**Testimony submitted to the Joint Committee on State Administration and Regulatory Oversight**

**In Support of H.3157/S.2077, An Act to ensure gender parity and racial and ethnic diversity on public boards and commissions**

**By Janis Soma, LWVMA Legislative Specialist, Women's Issues**

**September 22, 2021**

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts supports S.2077/H.3157, *An Act to ensure gender parity and racial and ethnic diversity on public boards and commissions*. The League supports equal rights for all under state and federal law regardless of race, color, gender, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation or disability.

Lack of gender and racial parity in positions of power is a cultural issue that has been widely reported and researched. The consensus is that parity will not be accomplished in a reasonable amount of time without proactive efforts, including the passage of state laws.<sup>1</sup> The Eos Foundation published a report in 2021 highlighting the disparities that exist on Massachusetts public boards and commissions.<sup>2</sup>

H.3157/S.2077 is proposing to solve a gender and racial imbalance on public boards and commissions where decisions occur that shape our policy and institutions. Proportional representation will allow for board room and commission decisions that reflect the needs of us all. Even though more women and people of color are in the pipeline after obtaining experience and education in their fields, the last 30 years has seen small gains in the number of boards achieving parity. Public board service prepares women for other careers in the public and private sectors. Access to this service is a steppingstone to diversifying many institutions and organizations. If there are no interventions to speed up the process, estimates vary from 50 to hundreds of years before gender and racial underrepresentation is resolved. This is an unacceptably long period of time to wait since governmental interventions such as H.3157/S.2077 can improve this power imbalance more quickly.

The League, which represents 47 local Leagues from Cape Cod to the Berkshires, supports parity on public boards and urges you to report H.3157/S.2077 favorably.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

---

<sup>1</sup> Thorne, Sharon and Konigsburg, *Gender Parity in the Boardroom Won't Happen on Its Own*. Harvard Business Review, February 12, 2020. (<https://hbr.org/2020/02/gender-parity-in-the-boardroom-wont-happen-on-its-own>)

<sup>2</sup> EOS Foundation, *Parity on Board: Gender, Race, and Ethnicity on 50 Prominent Massachusetts Public Boards and Commissions*, March 3, 2021. (<https://www.womenspowergap.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/WPG-Parity-on-Board-Presentation-3-3-21-FINAL-1.pdf>)