



Legislation Summary:

An Act to establish free access to ride to Support elections in Massachusetts (FARE Act)

Initial bill number(s): H.3384

Sponsors: Rep. Frank Moran

What the bill does, why LWVMA supports or opposes it, and the League position relative to this bill.

This bill would make buses, subway, and trolley services fare-free on the days of state-wide primaries and elections in the state's 15 regional transit authorities (RTAs). No ID or proof of voting would be required; the systems would just be free to all riders. The FARE Act would only apply to statewide primaries and elections. That means two days every two years. The FARE Act would only apply to bus, subway, and trolley services. Commuter rail services would not be fare free.

The 2020 elections in Massachusetts proved sort of paradoxical: although we saw record voter turnout levels in many communities, turnout was greatly unequal. In the state's suburban, white, high-income communities, voter turnout reached 85% or more. But in the state's urban, diverse, lower income communities, voter turnout was more than 30% lower. This was especially apparent in communities like Springfield, Lawrence, and New Bedford, where voter turnout rates just barely surpassed 50%. To close this voter turnout gap, we must implement reforms that break down financial and political barriers, easing accessibility to the polls. This is most true for Black and brown, low-income, and immigrant communities, who primarily live in cities and endure limited access to the polls. In Massachusetts, for example, approximately 9% of white households did not own a car as of 2017. But for Black households, that rate was 25%. For Hispanic households, it was 27%. Nationwide, 60% of those that depend on public transit are people of color. By easing access to public transit on election day, we would directly benefit underserved communities. This bill would apply in communities across the state.

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that voting is a fundamental citizen's right that must be guaranteed. (LWVUS) (1982) The 1986 LWVUS Convention affirmed an essential element for protecting the right to vote was encouraging participation in the political process. The 1990 convention affirmed that the LWVUS should continue emphasis on protecting the right to vote by working to increase voter participation. LWVMA reaffirmed that. *Where We Stand* [Preface \(lwwma.org\)](http://lwwma.org) p.14