



**Testimony submitted to the
Joint Committee on State Administration and Regulatory Oversight
In Support of S.2016, 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
May 10, 2023**

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts supports S.2016, *An Act to ensure gender parity and racial and ethnic diversity on public boards and commissions* because we believe in 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.¹ The Women's Power Gap at the Eos Foundation published a report in 2022 highlighting the disparities that exist on Massachusetts public boards and commissions. Although progress has been made, 56% of boards and commissions have not yet reached gender parity and Women of Color are greatly underrepresented compared to White women.²

S.2016 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. More women, people of color, and LGBTQ+ individuals are in the pipeline after obtaining experience and education in their fields, so there is an available pool of talent to tap. 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 a hundred or more years before gender and racial underrepresentation is resolved. This is an unacceptably long period of time to wait since governmental interventions such as S.2016 can improve this power imbalance more quickly.

The LWVMA, which represents 44 local Leagues from Cape Cod to the Berkshires, supports parity on public boards and commissions and urges you to report S.2016 favorably.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

¹ 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>)

² The Women's Power Gap at the Eos Foundation: Diversity Among Massachusetts' Most Prominent Boards and Commissions 2019-2022 Progress Report (<https://www.womenspowergap.org/>)