LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF MASSACHUSETTS

February 3, 2025

The Honorable Joan Lovely
State House, Room 413-D
Boston, MA, 02133

The Honorable Joanne Comerford
State House, Room 410
Boston, MA, 02133

The Honorable Pavel Payano
State House, Room 520
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Cindy Friedman
State House, Room 313
Boston, MA, 02133

The Honorable Paul Feeney
State House, Room 112
Boston, MA, 02133

The Honorable Bruce Tarr
State House, Room 308
Boston, MA, 02133

The Honorable William Brownsberger
State House, Room 319
Boston, MA, 02133

The Honorable Robyn Kennedy
State House, Room 507
Boston, MA, 02133

The Honorable Ryan Fattman
State House, Room 213-A
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Chair Lovely, Vice-Chair Friedman, and members of the Temporary Senate Committee on Rules:

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts (LWVMA) believes that democratic government depends upon informed and active participation at all levels of government. The League further believes that governmental bodies must protect the citizen's right to know by giving adequate notice of proposed actions, holding open meetings, and making public records accessible.

We commend the Senate Ways and Means Committee for posting committee votes publicly last session.

In our mission to empower voters and defend democracy, we applaud the priorities outlined by Senate President Spilka during her inaugural speech, and we urge the implementation of the following rules for the 194th session:

- Post all joint committee votes to malegislature.gov within 24 hours
- Make written testimony publicly available at malegislature.gov–**with strict protections for survivors of domestic violence and other vulnerable witnesses to ensure their safety and security**
- Provide notice of public hearings fourteen days in advance to allow advocates adequate time to prepare testimony and to make arrangements if they wish to testify in person
- Continue to offer unfettered access for incarcerated people to testify virtually
- Allow 48 hours for legislators to read final conference committee reports before floor vote

Based upon our experience with the Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Energy and Utilities (TUE) last session, we advise retaining the joint committee structure. The League opposes dividing joint committees into two separate committees as it would be an undue burden on the public. Advocates arranging leave from work and/or caregiving to testify cannot attend two separate public hearings–and historically there is very little notice of a hearing date.

We also note that pandemic emergency provisions expire March 31, 2025. We urge you to approve legislation to require a hybrid structure or at least remote access and participation for all meetings covered by the open meeting law rather than leaving such access as a local option.

LWVMA, representing 44 local chapters across 155 municipalities from Cape Cod to the Berkshires, urges you to adopt these measures in order to build a more informed and active citizenry.

Please contact us with any questions.

Sincerely,

Marie Gauthier
Board Co-President

Courtney Rau Rogers
Board Co-President

Jennifer Muroff
Legislative Action
Committee Chair