



CITY OF BOSTON

IN THE YEAR TWO THOUSAND TWENTY TWO

HOME RULE PETITION

WHEREAS, While there is often the narrative that young people are the leaders of tomorrow, young people play an equally important role in our democracy today and deserve a vote that reflects their contributions to our City; *and*

WHEREAS, People under the age of 18 already have to step up and be the adults in the room in a lot of different ways (e.g. hosting community forums, holding elected officials accountable, serving in leadership positions) with the exception of voting; *and*

WHEREAS, At the same time, a lot of decisions that directly impact young people are being made without their direct consent---they pay taxes but don't have a say in how they are spent; they can be tried as adults but are treated as minors in other courts of law; they are expected to advocate on behalf of their schools but are not given an equal voice to do so; *and*

WHEREAS, Support for lowering the voting age has seen support from neighboring cities and towns as well as from Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley, whose push to lower the voting age saw broad support from members of the House of Representatives; *and*

WHEREAS, Cities and towns throughout Massachusetts have endeavored to lower the voting age for municipal elections through Home Rule Petitions, including Somerville, Brookline, and Cambridge; *and*

WHEREAS, The time has come to acknowledge the critical role that young people play in our City and grant them the right to have a say in how our City is run; **NOW
THEREFORE BE IT**

ORDERED,

That a petition to the General Court, accompanied by a bill for a special law relating to the City of Boston to be filed with an attested copy of this order be, and hereby is, approved under Clause 1 of Section 8 of Article II, as amended, of the Articles of Amendment to the Constitution of the Commonwealth of

Massachusetts, to the end that legislation be adopted precisely as follows, except for clerical or editorial changes of form only:

PETITION FOR A SPECIAL LAW RE:

**AN ACT GRANTING THE CITY OF BOSTON THE AUTHORITY TO
PROVIDE LEGAL VOTING RIGHTS IN MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS FOR
CITY OF BOSTON RESIDENTS AGED 16 AND 17 YEARS OLD**

SECTION 1.

Notwithstanding the provisions of section 1 of chapter 51 of the General Laws or any other general or special law, rule or regulation to the contrary, any individual aged 16 or 17 years old residing in the City of Boston, who is ineligible to vote due to age under state law, but who is otherwise eligible to vote under state law, may upon application have their names entered on a list of voters established by the board of election commissioners for the City of Boston. Such individuals on the list of voters may vote in any election for local offices and local ballot questions in accordance with this Act. For the purposes of this Act, "municipal voters" are anyone who is eligible to vote pursuant to this Act in a local election or upon a local ballot question in the City of Boston, but not in state or federal elections by reason of age.

SECTION 2.

Said board of election commissioners shall establish a separate registration list for municipal voters who shall fill out an alternative registration form. This alternative registration form shall also pre-register municipal voters for state and federal elections, as authorized under section 47A in chapter 51 of the General Laws. Upon turning eighteen, each municipal voter shall be taken off the separate list and be automatically registered as a regular voter in accordance with state law, regulations, and guidelines. Said board shall create and print, at the city of Boston's expense, the alternative registration form needed for the dual purpose of registering municipal voters and pre-registering the same individuals as state voters pursuant to section 47A in chapter 51 of the General Laws.

SECTION 3.

Said board is hereby authorized to promulgate regulations, guidelines and forms to implement the purpose of this act.

SECTION 4.

If a local ballot question appears on a state election ballot, the board shall print a separate ballot for the local ballot question at the expense of the City of Boston.

SECTION 5.

Subsection (a) of section 4 in chapter 51 of the General Laws shall be amended by adding, after "county agricultural school or a police department," the phrase "except as specified in subsection (b) of this section."

SECTION 6.

Subsection (b) of section 4 in chapter 51 of the General Laws shall be amended by striking the language of "each person of 17 years of age or older" and replacing it with "each person 16 years of age or older".

It shall be further amended by adding, to the end of the subsection (b), the following sentences: “The name, residence, and age or date of birth of each 16 or 17 year old person who registers as a municipal voter in the City of Boston shall become a public record held by the Elections Department and publicly accessible as other voter records are. However, the name of any 16 year old person who has not registered to vote shall not be disclosed to any person other than the school committee or police department.”

SECTION 6.

The City of Boston is hereby authorized to pass ordinances to implement the purpose of this act subject to all the provisions of the Boston city charter.

SECTION 7.

Nothing in this act shall be construed to confer upon municipal voters under the age of 18 the right to vote for any state or federal office or any state or federal ballot questions.

Filed in Council: November 30, 2022