

My name is Deborah Shah and I am the Executive Director of Progressive Massachusetts. Thank you for hearing my testimony.

My education and passion for election reform began more than 50 years ago when, as a 10 year old, I slouched in my parent's living room, "attending" my first League of Women Voters meeting. It was one of hundreds of such meetings my activist mother held – and many of the women in the room that day in 1962 were original suffragettes who would go on the fight for the Voting Rights Bill of 1965.

I think we can all agree that we want a high level of voter participation. Active voters feel they have a stake in the political process and are more civically engaged. Unfortunately, while people across the Commonwealth have the right to vote, many of them don't in large measure because we make voting, - and registering to vote, more difficult than it needs to be. Limited voting hours, bureaucratic errors and arcane laws around voter registration make it difficult for hundreds of thousands of eligible voters to cast a ballot in every election.

Mr. Chairmen, members of the Committee, we are grateful for the many positive provisions in the bill before us today. No one in the election reform community doubts that these provisions will improve the situation for some. But the research indicates that Election Day Registration is the best policy for increasing eligible voter participation. I have included with my written testimony an analysis of EDR and other policies from the 2008 election done by the University of Wisconsin. This is the most rigorous analysis comparing multiple election reform policies. The report demonstrates that reforms that include EDR increase voter participation, and interestingly, early voting, when not paired with election day registration or Same Day Registration, actually lowered turnout. The report's authors conclude the EDR alone can increase voter participation in elections 6-7%

Ladies and Gentleman, we have been here before. In 2007 the Secretary of State indicated his support for the concept and Election Day Registration actually passed the Senate in 2008. A refilled bill had 18 supporters the following year. Just this past week, 14 of those supporters re-affirmed their support to me or my staff and two new Senators, who were not elected at the

time are willing to add their names to the list. In 2009, we had over 40 supporters in the House.

Since 2008, concerns about in-person voter fraud have been completely dispelled and, with the right implementation – one which allows for the proper planning time – the costs would be miniscule. This point is especially relevant today. We are asking you to amend today's bill to include Election Day Registration in large measure because early passage would give the hard-working clerks across the Commonwealth time to work with the Secretary of State to effectively implement EDR for vital state-wide elections in 2014.

Thank you for your time and consideration.