

CHILDREN'S VOTING COLLOQUIUM

**Testimony submitted to the Joint Committee on Election Laws
By Arlene Olivero, Cambridge, MA
June 20, 2023**

- In Support of [S.431/H.705](#) An Act relative to youth voter engagement**
- In Support of [H.686](#) An Act relative to age requirements in local elections**
- In Support of [H.670](#) / [S412](#) An Act enabling children's right to vote**
- In Support of [S.438](#) An Act ensuring municipal participation of the widest eligible range**
- In Support of [H.692](#) / [S429](#) An Act granting the city of Boston the authority to endow legal voting rights in municipal elections for city of Boston residents aged 16 and 17 years old**
- In Support of [H.3742](#) An Act granting the City of Somerville the authority to provide legal voting rights in municipal elections for City of Somerville residents aged 16 and 17 years old**
- In Support of [H.716](#) An Act amending the special act charter of the city of Northampton to allow residents sixteen years of age or older to vote in preliminary and city elections**
- In Support of [H.3874](#) An Act granting the town of Southborough the authority to provide legal voting rights in municipal elections for town of Southborough residents aged 17 years old.**

Chair Keenan, Chair Ryan, and members of the Joint Committee on Election Laws, I'm Arlene Olivero, the mother of two children ages 11 and 13, and I'm pleased to offer testimony **in support of all the bills before you this session that would expand the age eligibility of voting.**

I want to again bring to your attention the fact that, to date, a large segment of the population below the age of 18 have been devalued and disenfranchised by not being allowed to vote in local or national elections.

I believe that teens and younger children have the capacity to understand the implications of laws. They are subject directly to the impact of these laws and thus should have a voice and direct impact via voting in the formation of these laws.

Lowering the voting age will help our whole community to consider and value issues that impact children and young families more. It will engage, empower, and teach new skills to our children regarding how to think about community needs, consider the choices and limitations of government, act with responsibility and care for all citizens, and learn that their voice and needs matter in a democracy.

I believe that the constitution in its rendering of "We the people..." meant everyone.... not just a subset of the population in terms of being given the

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rights, freedoms, responsibilities, and roles in our nation.

I sincerely hope these bills will move forward, and I thank you for your consideration. I think our communities and nation will be better in the future if we can lower the voting age and engage more young citizens in the political system directly via their voting.

I urge the Joint Committee on Election Laws to report **all the bills before you this session that would expand the age eligibility of voting** favorably and in a timely manner.