



**Office of
Representative Hannah E. Kane
Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

For Immediate Release

Contact: Anna Darrow, 617-722-2810, Anna.Darrow@mahouse.gov

March 12, 2021

Representative Kane supports bill expanding mail-in voting option until June 30

BOSTON – State Representative Hannah Kane (R-Shrewsbury) recently supported legislation that would provide a temporary three-month extension of the state’s mail-in voting law, moving the sunset date from March 31 to June 30.

House Bill 73, *An Act further providing for early voting by mail*, was engrossed by the House on March 1 and enacted on March 11. Representative Kane said the extension is needed to accommodate the large number of municipal elections that are scheduled to take place this year between April and June.

The bill, which has also been enacted by the Senate, is now on Governor Charlie Baker’s desk for his review and signature.

House Bill 73 is the latest in a series of bills that have been passed by the House and Senate over the last 12 months to help ensure Massachusetts residents can safely exercise their right to vote during the ongoing COVID-19 global pandemic. In March of 2020, legislation was approved allowing cities and towns to postpone municipal elections and caucuses until a date certain falling on or before June 30, 2020 and authorizing early voting by mail using no-excuse absentee ballots.

In July of 2020, the House and Senate granted additional options to voters, including an expansion of mail-in voting and early in-person voting for the 2020 state primary and general elections. Most recently, during the Fiscal Year 2021 budget debate in November, the Senate proposed extending early mail-in voting to June 30, but budget conferees opted to roll that date back to March 31.

While there have been legitimate concerns raised about proposals to permanently extend expanded mail-in voting that must still be addressed, Representative Kane said a temporary extension is warranted, given the continued public health crisis. The Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA) strongly supports the temporary extension, with MMA Executive Director and CEO Geoffrey C. Beckwith writing to House and Senate leadership on February 12 advocating for “the swiftest possible enactment” of legislation extending the sunset date.

“Mail-in voting is a safe and effective way to reduce the risk of exposure to and transmission of the

COVID-19 virus,” Beckwith wrote. “The extension of mail-in voting to March 31 is appreciated, yet the reality is that only a small number of municipal elections will take place before that date. Well over 250 towns have scheduled their elections to take place between April 1 and June 30, and cannot move their elections ahead to March. With the pandemic still raging, and with vaccine deployment for the general population still months away, it is vital that voters be provided a workable mail-in option, and that municipal employees and poll workers be protected by reducing the volume of voters who appear in person.”

During floor debate, the House concurred with a Senate amendment that would ensure that voters who are blind, visually impaired, or have a disability that makes it difficult or impossible to effectively access a paper vote by mail ballot can request an accommodation from their local election official by phone or electronically. Such requests must be submitted no later than four business days before the election, and local election officials will be required to make “reasonable efforts to grant accommodations to the voter” once a request is received.

###