



MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
GRADUATE STUDENT COUNCIL

24 March 2016

General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Boston, MA 02133

Speaker DeLeo, President Rosenberg, and Members of the General Court:

We write to you to express our support for Bill H.3937, *An Act automatically registering eligible voters and enhancing safeguards against fraud*.

The Graduate Student Council (GSC) represents the 6,800 graduate students of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in all matters concerning their quality of life and work and their civic engagement during their studies at MIT. We support all measures that increase student engagement in the political process, so **we strongly support Bill H.3937**.

It is well known that young adults (18 to 24 years old) are the least likely to be registered to vote. This is particularly pronounced in non-presidential years. U.S. Census data shows that, nationwide, less than 54% of eligible voters 18 to 24 years of age were registered to vote in 2012 and that no more than 46% were registered in the years of any recent non-presidential elections. In contrast, over 75% of citizens age 65 years and older have been registered in every recent election year on record.

We urge you to consider amending Bill H.3937 to allow educational institutions to participate in automatic voter registration. Students at Massachusetts universities represent an important subset of the young adult population, and automatic registration would greatly increase their ability to participate in local and state government during their studies.

Bill H.3937 would, in essence, make voter registration an opt-out system in the Commonwealth, in contrast to the current opt-in system. Examples in other fields have made it clear that opt-out systems will see much greater participation than opt-in systems. For example, Germany, which uses an opt-in system for organ donor registration, has an organ donation consent rate of 12% among its population, while Austria, a country with a very similar culture and economic development, but which uses an opt-out system, has a consent rate of 99.98%.

We urge you to pass Bill H.3937, whether it is amended as we have recommended or not. This bill would substantially improve the ability of all of our citizens to participate in the government of the Commonwealth.

Best regards,

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MIT Nuclear Science and Engineering

Rachel Gilmore
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