

SENATE No. 412

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Sal N. DiDomenico, (BY REQUEST)

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in General Court assembled:

The undersigned legislators and/or citizens respectfully petition for the adoption of the accompanying bill:

An Act enabling children’s right to vote.

PETITION OF:

NAME:

DISTRICT/ADDRESS:

Robin Chen

SENATE No. 412

By Mr. DiDomenico (by request), a petition (accompanied by bill, Senate, No. 412) of Robin Chen for legislation to enable children’s right to vote. Election Laws.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

**In the One Hundred and Ninety-Third General Court
(2023-2024)**

An Act enabling children’s right to vote.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 1 of Chapter 50 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2018
2 Official Edition, is hereby amended by inserting in alphabetical position:-

3 “Capacity to make voting decisions independently” shall mean having the ability to
4 understand and appreciate the nature and consequences of voting decisions, including the
5 benefits and risks of and alternatives to any candidate for office, referendum question, or matter
6 of public affairs, and to reach an informed decision, without significant input from a caregiver

7 SECTION 2. The first sentence of Section 1 of Chapter 51 of the General Laws, as
8 appearing in the 2018 Official Edition, is hereby amended by replacing “years” with “days” and
9 by removing “a person under guardianship or”

10 SECTION 3. Section 1 of chapter 51 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2018
11 Official Edition, is hereby amended by inserting after the first sentence the following:-

12 Section 2. A voter who lacks capacity to make voting decisions independently who
13 arrives willingly at a polling site with a family member may receive from this family member
14 any guidance, support, or executive assistance necessary to cast their ballot, except that no such
15 ballot may be counted if the voter informs the presiding officer that the ballot should not count.

16 SECTION 4. Subsection (a) of Section 4 of Chapter 51 of the General Laws, as appearing
17 in the 2018 Official Edition, is hereby amended in the first sentence, by replacing “three years”
18 with “one day.”

19 SECTION 5. Section 4 of chapter 51 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2018
20 Official Edition, is hereby amended by inserting after section (e) the following subsection:-

21 (f) The name and address of any person under the age of 17 who so requests shall appear
22 on the street list.

23 SECTION 6. Section 4A of Chapter 51 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2018
24 Official Edition, is hereby amended by replacing the first sentence with the following:-

25 During the course of the annual listing of residents, the registrars shall notify residents of
26 the opportunity to register themselves or their dependent family members as voters and shall
27 provide residents with assistance in registering themselves or their dependent family members to
28 vote.

29 SECTION 7. Section 14 of Chapter 51 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2018
30 Official Edition, is hereby amended by replacing “years” with “days”

31 SECTION 8. Chapter 51 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2018 Official Edition,
32 is hereby amended by inserting, after Section 26A, the following sections:-

33 Section 26B. (a) The state secretary, in consultation with the commissioner of the
34 department of public health, the registrar of the registry of vital records and statistics, the
35 commissioner of early education and care, and the president of the most populous member
36 organization whose mission is to advance pediatric medical care, shall establish a non-partisan
37 baby and caregiver voter challenge program and shall promulgate regulations to implement the
38 program in participating birth centers, childcare centers, and pediatric medical practices in the
39 commonwealth; provided, however, that the regulations shall identify registration time periods
40 that allow eligible persons to participate in all municipal and state elections, including primary
41 elections.

42 (b) Directors of programs shall ensure that each voter challenge program implemented in
43 their organization provides opportunities for outreach and for all eligible voters to register to
44 vote, regardless of whether or not the eligible voter has a formal relationship with their
45 organization.

46 Section 26C. (a) The state secretary, in consultation with the commissioner of elementary
47 and secondary education, the board of elementary and secondary education, and the executive
48 director of the most populous member organization whose mission is to advance afterschool
49 programming shall establish a non-partisan voter challenge program and shall promulgate
50 regulations to implement the program in participating schools and afterschool or community
51 centers in the commonwealth; provided, however, that the regulations shall identify registration
52 time periods that allow eligible voters to participate in all municipal and state elections,
53 including primary elections.

54 (b) Superintendents of schools shall ensure that each voter challenge program
55 implemented in their districts provides opportunities for outreach and for all eligible voters to
56 register or pre-register to vote on any participating school or afterschool campus. An enrolled
57 student may apply to serve as a voter outreach coordinator or be selected to serve as a voter
58 outreach coordinator by a peer nomination process.

59 SECTION 9. Section 42 of Chapter 51 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2018
60 Official Edition, is hereby amended by replacing “16 years” with “18 days”

61 SECTION 10. Section 47A of Chapter 51 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2018
62 Official Edition, is hereby repealed.

63 SECTION 11. Section 50 of Chapter 51 of the General Laws, as appearing in the 2018
64 Official Edition, is hereby amended by inserting after “commonwealth”:-

65 who becomes eighteen days of age after the final time for registration under said section
66 twenty-six, or.