



**The Office of State Representative Denise C. Garlick
Chair, House Committee on Bills in the Third Reading
State House | Boston, MA 02133**

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Honorable Antonio Cabral
Chair, Joint Committee on State Administration and Regulatory Oversight
State House, Room 22
24 Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02133

June 2, 2021

Dear Chair Cabral, Chair Pacheco, and Honorable Members of the Committee,

I write today in support of **H.3152**, *An Act to modernize participation in public meetings*, which I have filed this session to better address barriers to participation in democratic processes across the Commonwealth. I respectfully request the committee grant H.3152 a favorable report.

Over the last fourteen months, our nation and our Commonwealth battled sickness; sickness in body due to the COVID-19 pandemic and sickness in soul due to systems and structures of racism plaguing Black, Brown, and Asian members of our communities. Through the fog of political discourse and calamity, friends and neighbors demonstrated great resilience and a renewed desire to understand and participate in public processes at every level. As we emerge from the COVID-19 state of emergency, it is clear that some skills we have learned and tools we have mastered during the pandemic are here to stay. The ability for public meetings to be held remotely, and for the public to participate remotely, must be made permanent.

During the most difficult and unprecedented year, the ability to participate remotely continues to serve municipalities as a valuable tool to promote access and participation in our democracy. Cities, towns, and residents overcame concerns over safety, security and access of a system that relied on technology to conduct public meetings and the result is stronger government and improve processes. Lack of mobility or access to transportation must never again be reason to exclude members of our community from engaging in our democratic processes.

Access to public meetings has proven pivotal as we continue to build a better Commonwealth that recognizes and celebrates the diversity of voices, perspectives of every member of the community, and strength of good government. Prior to the implementation of remote participation, barriers like long hours at work, lack of access to childcare, and inclement weather prevented residents from attending meetings. H.3152 utilizes a straightforward approach that allows residents to participate in democracy in the manner that best serves their needs - whether remote or in person. While the requirement for all public meetings to be held in a physical public location would remain, an alternative means of public access, such as through telephone or internet, must also be available to the public.

Thank you for your careful consideration, I respectfully request that the H.3152 be granted a favorable report. I hope to be helpful to you and your staff in any way possible as you consider this legislation. Please do not hesitate to contact my office with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Denise C. Garlick". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "G".

Denise C. Garlick
State Representative
13th Norfolk District