

An Act to promote and enhance civic engagement

Sponsors: Sen. Harriette Chandler (SD954) / Rep. Linda Dean Campbell (HD2189)

Support high-quality, student-centered civic education for all

The Challenge:

- K-12 civic education is most effective when it is widespread, engaging, age-appropriate and linked to real-world challenges in our own communities.
- Our politics and public discourse are highly polarized, inequality is growing and media literacy is lacking, but the challenges and opportunities we face as a Commonwealth demand the talent and input of all citizens, including our young people.
- Students in the Commonwealth must develop the skills and knowledge of effective citizenship, but they can't do it alone. Our public schools play a vital role.
- Currently, while some pockets of excellence exist, civic education in Massachusetts is inconsistent and disproportionately available to students in higher-income school districts.
- Funding is needed to support teachers and district leaders for implementation of high-quality civic education.

White and wealthy students are 3 times more likely to achieve "proficient" in civics than Black, Hispanic and poor students.

The Bill:

- Supports comprehensive, project-based civic education integrated into existing curricula and focused on local communities.
- Authorizes funding to support implementation through the Civics Project Fund.
- Incentivizes voting and other vital forms of participation alongside important political learning outcomes through the Edward M. Kennedy Civics Challenge and the High School Voter Challenge.
- Maintains local control and classroom decision-making.

Fewer than one in five young people voted in the 2014 midterm election, and among youth who did not complete high school, just 8% voted.

The Benefits:

- All students – in all public school districts – deserve the support to become informed, engaged citizens of the Commonwealth.
- Courses that include community engagement can improve academic outcomes and better prepare students for college and careers.
- When young people are exposed to high-quality civic education, they are more likely to be informed voters and lifelong participants in political and civic life.

To sign on, please contact:

Bryan Barash in office of Sen. Chandler: bryan.barash@masenate.gov

Sascha Alach in office of Rep. Campbell: Sascha.alach@mahouse.gov

Sources: Ballard, P., Cohen, A., Littenberg-Tobias, J. (2016). Action Civics for promoting civic development: Main effects of program participation and differences by project characteristics. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 58, 377-390. National Assessment of Educational Progress, 8th Grade Civics (2014), Tisch College's tabulations of the Census Voter Turnout public data set (Current Population Survey Voting Supplement, 2014).