

HOUSE No. 841

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

PRESENTED BY:

Erika Uytterhoeven

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 expanding voting access for college and university students.

PETITION OF:

NAME:	DISTRICT/ADDRESS:	DATE ADDED:
<i>Erika Uytterhoeven</i>	<i>27th Middlesex</i>	<i>2/18/2021</i>

HOUSE No. 841

By Ms. Uytterhoeven of Somerville, a petition (accompanied by bill, House, No. 841) of Erika Uytterhoeven relative to the designation of polling places. Election Laws.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

**In the One Hundred and Ninety-Second General Court
(2021-2022)**

An Act expanding voting access for college and university students.

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 24 of Chapter 54 of the general laws, as appearing in the 2020 official edition, is
2 hereby amended, by striking out Section 24, as so appearing, and inserting in place thereof the
3 following section:

4

5 Section 24: Designation of Polling Places

6

7 (a) Municipal legislatures, except where charters provide otherwise, shall, twenty days at
8 least before the biennial state or annual or biennial city election and ten days at least before any
9 special election of a state or city officer therein, designate the polling place for each voting
10 precinct and cause it to be suitably fitted up and prepared therefor. In a city or town which has
11 provided voting booths such booths may be placed in the public ways of such city or town,
12 provided said ways are left reasonably safe and convenient for public travel. It shall be in a

13 public, orderly, and convenient portion of the precinct; provided, however that if the municipal
14 legislature determines that the public convenience would be better served, the municipal
15 legislature may designate a polling place in an adjacent precinct of a city or town or may house
16 all polling places in a single building within the town. In any city or town, if the polling places
17 for two or more precincts are located in the same building and the total number of registered
18 voters in any such two or more precincts does not exceed three thousand, only one set of election
19 officers need be appointed for such precincts, but separate ballot boxes and voting lists for each
20 precinct shall be used. If, in a town of five precincts or less, all of which are located in one
21 building, the municipal legislature so votes, only one warden need be appointed to supervise all
22 such precincts, and the number of inspectors shall be determined by the municipal legislature,
23 without disturbing the balance between the political parties. There shall, however, be one clerk
24 appointed for each such precinct.

25

26 (b) Any precinct containing an institution for higher education, as defined in Chapter 15C
27 Section 3 of the general laws, with more than one thousand students, faculty or staff, who are
28 eligible to register to vote in the precinct, shall designate a polling place within one-half mile of
29 the institution for higher education. If a precinct contains a public institution for higher
30 education, as defined in Chapter 15A, Section 5, the public institution for higher education, upon
31 request from the election clerk, shall provide without charge to the municipality a facility for use
32 as a polling place that meets all applicable requirements under Section 24 and as established by
33 the Elections Division.

34

35 (c) Alcoholic beverages shall not be sold in any portion of a building which is designated
36 as a polling place, during voting hours or while ballots are being counted therein.

37

38 (d) When the polling places have been designated in the city of Boston, the board of
39 election commissioners of said city may post in such places as it may determine a printed
40 description of the polling places designated and may give further notice thereof; and when the
41 polling places have been designated in any other city or in any town, the municipal legislature of
42 such city in at least five public places in each precinct thereof, and the municipal legislature of
43 such town in at least three public places in each precinct thereof, shall forthwith post a printed
44 description of the polling places designated and may give further notice thereof.

45

46 (e) When a polling place in a voting precinct is changed from one location to another, the
47 board of election commissioners in the city of Boston, the municipal legislature in any other city
48 or town shall cause printed descriptions of such polling place to be posted in such public places
49 in such precinct as they determine and shall give notice by mail to each residence of one or more
50 registered voters therein.