



Massachusetts Municipal Lawyers Association

March 1, 2023

To: The Honorable Ronald J. Mariano, Speaker of the House

Re: Sections 39 and 42-44 of House Bill 57 - An Act Making Appropriations for Fiscal Year 2023 to Provide for Supplementing Certain Existing Appropriations and for Certain Other Activities and Projects

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Dear Speaker Mariano:

I am writing to you in my capacity as the President of the Massachusetts Municipal Lawyers Association (the "MMLA"), the Commonwealth's municipal bar association, to communicate our strong support of language contained in the Fiscal Year 2023 Supplemental Budget before the House (House Bill 57), that would extend certain COVID-19 relief measures applicable to municipalities and other public bodies subject to the Open Meeting Law.

Specifically, the MMLA urges passage of Sections 39 and 42-44 of the budget package, which would extend the local option to remotely participate at meetings of public bodies, agencies and commissions, as well as Town Meetings, until March 31, 2025 (two years from the current expiration date of March 31, 2023).

MMLA is sincerely grateful to the House Ways and Means Committee for supporting these provisions in its redraft of the supplemental budget package, and views this as an important step in ensuring public access to local government while also recognizing the realities still faced by municipalities and districts across the Commonwealth due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This extension also provides all interested parties ample opportunity to develop a more permanent solution, which MMLA endorses, and we offer to partner with you and your colleagues as such proposal is developed. Again, MMLA strongly supports these COVID-19 relief extensions included in H.57 and urges its swift passage in order to provide public bodies throughout the Commonwealth certainty prior to March 31, 2023, the current extension's expiration

Thank you for your consideration of these comments and for your leadership.

Sincerely,

Matthew G. Feher, Esq.
President, MMLA

CC: The Honorable Karen E. Spilka, Senate President
The Honorable Aaron M. Michlewitz, Chair, House Committee on Ways and Means
The Honorable Michael J. Rodrigues, Chair, Senate Committee on Ways and Means