



Massachusetts Municipal Lawyers Association

March 9, 2023

To: The Honorable Karen E. Spilka, Senate President

Re: Sections 33 and 38-41 of Senate Bill 23 - An Act making appropriations for the Fiscal Year 2023 to provide for supplementing certain existing appropriations and for certain other activities and projects

PRESIDENT
Matthew G. Feher

VICE PRESIDENT
Karis L. North

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
James B. Lampke

**IMMEDIATE PAST
PRESIDENT**
Brandon H. Moss

PAST PRESIDENT
Ellen Callahan Doucette

EXECUTIVE BOARD
Christopher L. Brown

Ivria Glass Fried

Christine M. Griffin

Donna MacNichol

Susan C. Murphy

Brian C. O'Donnell

David Shapiro

Shawn A. Williams

Dear President Spilka,

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 Senate Ways and Means redraft of the Fiscal Year 2023 Supplemental Budget now before the Senate (S.23), that would extend certain COVID-19 relief measures applicable to municipalities and other public bodies subject to the Open Meeting Law. This same language was also included in the House-engrossed package passed last week.

Specifically, the MMLA urges passage of Sections 33 and 38-41 of S.23, which would extend the local option to remotely participate at meetings of public bodies, agencies and commissions, as well as an option for fully remote or hybrid participation at Town Meetings, until March 31, 2025 (two years from the current expiration date of March 31, 2023).

This extension is 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. Additionally, the extension also provides all interested parties ample opportunity to develop a more permanent solution. MMLA endorses a more permanent solution, and we welcome the opportunity to partner with you and your Senate colleagues as such solution is developed. Again, MMLA strongly supports the extensions included in S.23 and urges passage of these provisions in any Senate-engrossed budget package in order to provide public bodies throughout the Commonwealth with certainty prior to the current extension's expiration on March 31, 2023.

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

Sincerely,

Matthew G. Feher, Esq.
President, MMLA

CC: The Honorable Ronald J. Mariano, Speaker of the House
The Honorable Michael J. Rodrigues, Chair, Senate Committee on Ways and Means
The Honorable Cindy Friedman, Vice-Chair, Senate Committee on Ways and Means
The Honorable Aaron Michlewitz, Chair, House Committee on Ways and Means

