

2021-2022 Legislative Agenda

MASSPIRG's mission is to deliver persistent, results-oriented public interest advocacy that protects consumers, preserves the environment, encourages a fair, sustainable economy, promotes public health and fosters responsive, democratic government.

Each legislative session, we work on bills that advance public interest reforms and we collaborate with the chief sponsors and cosponsors to promote them. This session there are hundreds of policies being considered which could safeguard public health, protect consumers in the marketplace, transform our energy and transportation systems, reduce waste, remove toxic threats, curb wasteful spending, revitalize our democracy, and protect our environment.

Below please find selected state priorities from our legislative agenda for the 2021-2022 session.

Getting to Zero Waste

Contact: Janet Domenitz, Executive Director, janet.domenitz@masspirg.org

Our incinerators are spewing toxic pollution and our landfills are overflowing and leaking. That's because we bury, burn or export more than half of our waste. Most of the waste that ends up in incinerators and landfills, should be diverted, eliminated, or recycled. MASSPIRG is fighting to get the Commonwealth on the path to a zero waste future and to ensure that state waste policy is dedicated to the principle of reduce, reuse, recycle.

Bill Title: An Act to Expand the Bottle Bill, S 2149 & H 3289

Lead Bill Sponsors: Senator Cynthia Creem and Representative Marjorie Decker

Deposits are the single most successful tactic for recycling beverage containers. But the bottle bill has not been updated since it became law almost 40 years ago. This bill would expand the deposit to cover water bottles, nips, vitamin drinks and other containers---the vast majority of which end up as litter or waste. It also raises the deposit from 5 to 10 cents.

Bill Title: An Act Reducing Plastic Bag Pollution, H 902 & S 525

Lead Bill Sponsors: Representative Lori Ehrlich and Senator James Eldridge

Nothing we use for an average of 6 minutes should pollute our environment for years. Plastic bags litter our parks and open space, choke marine animals, and waste millions of gallons of petroleum, one of their main ingredients. This bill would follow the 140 cities and towns in our state, including Boston, which have already restricted single use plastic bags, and make it a statewide law.

Bill Title: An Act to Save Recycling Costs in the Commonwealth, H 878 & S 610

Lead Bill Sponsors: Representative Michael Day and Senator Michael Rush

This bill will reduce packaging waste and improve recycling by creating a "polluter pays" model of producer responsibility for packaging and other items, making producers responsible for funding collection and recovery of materials they use and sell.

Bill Title: An Act to Restrict the Use of Polystyrene, H 2263 & S 1370

Lead Sponsor: Representative Marjorie Decker and Senator Michael Barrett

For decades, we've known that one of the worst forms of plastic pollution is polystyrene foam---what most of us call Styrofoam. The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that we produce more than 3 million tons of polystyrene every year, and Americans throw away an estimated 25 billion polystyrene cups every year, or about

82 cups per person. Polystyrene doesn't degrade and is not recyclable, as a result it clogs our landfills, litters our streets, and pollutes our environment. This bill prohibits the sale and use of most single-use polystyrene containers.

Bill Title: An Act to Reduce Single-Use Plastics from the Environment, H 869 & S 579

Lead Bill Sponsors: Representative Michelle Ciccolo and Senator Jason Lewis

This bill is a comprehensive response to a huge problem: Over the last 60 years, 10 billion tons of plastic have been produced, and only 9% has ever been recycled. What's worse, manufacturing plastic requires petroleum--a fossil fuel. This bill includes a wide range of provisions that will work toward eliminating single-use plastics from our waste stream and environment, including the reduction of plastic straws, nips, and polystyrene, among other items.

Bill Title: An Act to Support Restaurants and Reduce Single-Use Plastics in the Environment, H 870

Lead Bill Sponsor: Representative Michelle Ciccolo

Also included as a part of HD.3596 and filed as a stand-alone bill, this measure requires that restaurants only provide customers with single-use utensils and other takeout materials (straws, stirrers, cup sleeves, condiment packets, etc.) if the customer asks for them. If customers request these materials, restaurants would then charge a small fee that the restaurant is then able to retain.

Bill Title: An Act Relative to the Digital Right to Repair, H 341 & S 166

Lead Bill Sponsors: Representative Claire Cronin and Senator Michael Brady

Massachusetts gets rid of more than 8,000 cell phones every day. We should keep our electronics working and off the scrap heap, but the companies that make today's electronics, from phones to appliances to modern tractors, actively block access to what we need to fix them. That means more cost for consumers and more toxic electronic waste. This bill gives consumers and independent repair businesses access to the parts, tools, technical manuals, diagnostic software and firmware needed to keep electronics working.

Protecting Consumers

Contact: Deirdre Cummings, Legislative Director, dcummings@masspirg.org

Our economy works for everyone when consumers are equal players in the marketplace. But all too often consumers are sold inferior or unsafe products or services, lose millions of dollars in hidden and or excessive fees, or charged too much for products and services due to failures in the marketplace.

Bill Title: In opposition to: An Act Further Regulating Business Practices Between Motor Vehicle Dealers, Manufacturers, and Distributors, S 183 H 407

Lead Bill Sponsors: Senator Brendan Crighton and Representative Daniel Hunt

MASSPIRG is working to defeat this bill backed by auto dealers which threatens public safety. Specifically, this bill would roll back important consumer protections under existing state laws, by opening the floodgates to the sale of unsafe and dangerous unrepaired recalled cars on our roadways.

Bill Title: An Act Regulating the Use of Credit Reports by Employers, S 1154 & H 2019

Lead Bill Sponsors: Senator Michael Barrett and Representative Liz Malia

Given that as many as 1 in 4 consumer credit reports contain significant errors this bill limits the use of credit reports in employment decisions.

**Budget: Reducing the High Cost of College Textbooks, FY22, Line Item #7066-0025
Increase the line item by \$2.5 million to a total of \$5million.**

Compounding the escalating cost of college is the growing expense of textbooks and other course material. High textbook costs, as much as \$500 every semester, have led nearly two-thirds of students to skip buying a book. To address this growing crisis, we support adding \$2.5 million to Massachusetts Dept of Higher Education's Innovation Fund (HEIF), included in FY 22 budget Line Item #7066-0025 to support Open Educational Resources, or OERs. OERs are teaching, learning, and research materials that replace the need for expensive textbooks. OERs have been released under an open license that permits free access, use, adaptation and redistribution by others with no or limited restrictions.

Transforming Transportation in the Commonwealth

Contact: John Stout, Transportation Advocate, jstout@masspirg.org

Our transportation system now accounts for 40 percent of the greenhouse gas emissions in Massachusetts, more than any other source. Meanwhile, hundreds of Bay Staters die each year in traffic accidents, as well as from the adverse health effects of air pollution. In order to curb greenhouse gas emissions, reduce air pollution and make traveling through Massachusetts safer, we need to transform our transportation system, a goal made even more urgent as we come out of the COVID-19 pandemic. MASSPIRG is working to fix our existing transportation infrastructure and get Bay Staters out of their cars and onto cleaner, safer and more accessible modes of transportation, like electrified public transit, walking and biking.

Bill Title: An Act to Increase Regional Transit Accessibility in the Commonwealth, S 2277 & H 3413

Lead Bill Sponsors: Senator Harriette Chandler, Representative Natalie Blais

Even though it's been subject to decades of underinvestment, our Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs) have been a lifeline for essential workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. This bill would give RTAs the sustainable funding they need to improve and expand service, enhance access to jobs, education, healthcare, and other essential needs. More investment in RTAs would result in cleaner air, and reduced greenhouse gas emissions in the Commonwealth. This bill sets a base funding amount of \$94 million per year, with an annual CPI increase beginning in FY22. The bill also strengthens the RTA council, by adding new rider voices and sets the stage for an electric bus program rollout.

Bill Title: An Act to Promote Zero-Emission Vehicle Fleets by 2035, S 2139 & H 3255

Lead Bill Sponsors: Senator Joe Boncore and Representatives Christine Barber

The Commonwealth's transportation system is now the number one polluter in the state. We need to move away from fossil-fuel powered automobiles and electrify our public and private fleets. In addition to requiring the electrification of school and transit buses, this bill would require that all vehicles purchased or leased by the Commonwealth be zero-emission by 2026. It would also require that privately-owned and operated passenger vehicles used for commercial ride-sharing and ride-hailing be zero-emissions by 2035.

Bill Title: An Act Promoting Zero-Emission Vehicles, S 2151 & H 3347

Lead Bill Sponsor: Senator Brendan Crighton and Representative Joan Meschino

This bill encourages the purchase of private electric vehicles (EVs) in the Bay State by establishing a low-income rebate program for new and used EVs as well as a permanent funding source for the MOR-EV program. Additionally, this bill lays the groundwork for a statewide charging infrastructure, including updating building codes to include minimum EV charging parking requirements and ensuring the availability of off-street charging.

Bill Title: An Act Relative to Public Transit Electrification, S 2292 & H 3559

Lead Bill Sponsors: Senator Brendan Crighton, Representatives Christine Barber & Steven Owens

To reach our climate goals, Massachusetts needs to take bold action. This bill sets targets, both intermediate and long-term, for public transit electrification, including buses, commuter rail and maintenance facilities. This bill would require the MBTA and RTAs to fully electrify their fleets by 2030 and 2035 respectively.

Bill Title: An Act Relative to Transportation Governance, S 2266 & H 3542

Lead Bill Sponsors: Senator Joseph Boncore & Representative Joan Meschino

The Fiscal Management Control Bureau (FMCB), was created as a temporary body to provide additional oversight during the transit crisis of 2015. This bill restructures the FMCB board makeup and responsibilities to address longer term goals: it would task the new FMCB to focus their efforts on operations, long-term financing, safety and decarbonization as well as to require them to report their progress annually.

Bill Title: An Act Creating a New Deal for Transportation in the Commonwealth, S 2265

Lead Bill Sponsors: Senator Joseph Boncore

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the Commonwealth's transportation infrastructure was in desperate need of modernization. In order to incentivize the use of public transit, curb air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, we need to transform our transportation system so that it's cleaner, healthier and more accessible to all Bay Staters. This bill proposes major changes to the transportation status quo including: a 50 percent increase in the state's gas tax by 2025, the creation of a congestion pricing commission, a Vehicle Miles Travelled (VMT) study, low income and fare-free pilot programs for the MBTA and RTA as well as late-night bus trips, a revamped 7-member MBTA FMCB, new surcharges on parking space rentals and purchases as well as higher TNC fees.

Reducing Toxic Chemicals

Contact: Deirdre Cummings, Legislative Director, dcummings@masspirg.org

There are more than 80,000 chemicals on the market in the United States, used in everything from perfumes and household cleaners to fertilizers and industrial solvents. Yet most of them go directly into use without testing their impact on our health, or the long-term consequences for the environment. Given what we know about the potential harm some chemicals can do, we shouldn't rush a chemical into widespread industrial or commercial use before we know for sure that it's safe. Certainly, we should stop using the ones we know are toxic.

Bill Title: An Act Relative to the Use of Glyphosate on Public Lands, S 574

Lead Bill Sponsor: Senator Jason Lewis and Representative Carmine Gentile

The World Health Organization has warned that the main ingredient in Monsanto's Roundup, glyphosate, is a probable human carcinogen. Despite the risks we spray 26 million pounds of Roundup on public parks, playgrounds, schools and gardens every year. And now studies are finding glyphosate in places it shouldn't be including cereals, beer, ice cream, and our bodies. This bill takes the first step to reduce exposure and use of Roundup by preventing the use of Round Up in our parks, schools and other public lands.

Bill Title: An Act Governing the Use of Pesticides Containing the Herbicide Substance Glyphosate in the Commonwealth, S 575 & H 929

Lead Bill Sponsors: Senator Jason Lewis and Representative Carmine Gentile

This bill reduces the use of glyphosate-containing herbicides by restricting its use to licensed pesticide applicators only.

Polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a group of approximately 9,000 man-made toxic chemicals used to make products stain proof, water resistant and stick proof. But research links PFAS exposure in humans to cancer, immune system deficiencies, high cholesterol and low fertility, and even developmental issues in children and infants. Moreover, the health impacts of PFAS are magnified because they accumulate in the food chain and persist in the environment indefinitely.

Bill Title: An Act to Ban the Use of PFAS in Food Packaging, H 2348

Lead Bill Sponsor: Representative Jack Lewis

Bill Title: An Act Relative to Chemicals in Food Packaging, S 1494

Lead Bill Sponsor: Senator Michael Moore

PFAS are used to make food packaging grease- and water-resistant. They are also used in some carpeting, upholstery, and apparel, despite their links to health problems. When PFAS-treated food packaging is used, the chemicals can leach into the food and then into our bodies. The dangerous chemicals can also seep into our soil and water when the packaging ends up in a landfill. As a result, scientists have found PFAS contaminating the blood of 97 percent of Americans. These bills would prohibit the sale or distribution of any food packaging containing PFAS in Massachusetts.

Bill Title: An Act Restricting Toxic PFAS Chemicals in Consumer Products to Protect our Health H 939 & S 1387

Lead Bill Sponsor: Representative Jack Lewis and Senator Jo Comerford

After food and water, carpets, rugs, furniture and other textiles are considered major sources of exposure to PFAS, along with aftermarket sprays applied to these products. This bill bans the use of PFAS in carpets, rugs, furniture and other textiles, personal care products and cookware.

Bill Title: An Act for Massachusetts Toxic Free Kids, H 2348 & S 207

Lead Bill Sponsor: Representative Jim Hawkins and Senator Cindy Friedman

Requires the removal of most dangerous toxic chemicals, including PFAS, in children's products, after a 3-year phase out.

Promoting Public Health & Safety

Contact: Deirdre Cummings, Legislative Director, dcummings@masspirg.org

Lead is a potent neurotoxin that affects how our children develop, learn, and behave. Yet, according to the Department of Environmental Protection more than half of the 43,000 taps tested from 980 schools across Massachusetts have tested positive for lead.

Bill Title: An Act Ensuring Safe Drinking Water in Schools H 906 & S 580

Lead Bill Sponsors: Representative Lori Ehrlich and Senator Joan Lovely

This bill protects children's health by getting the lead out of the water at all schools and child care centers by requiring: the removal of lead service lines, the largest single source of lead in water; the installation of lead certified filters or water filling stations; and the testing of water at schools regularly. The bill establishes a health-based lead level standard for schools and day care centers of 1ppb and requires the immediate shut-off of outlets with elevated levels of lead.

Bill Title: An Act Relative to Better Buildings, H 3366 & S 2232

Lead Bill Sponsors: Representative Maria Robinson and Senator Rebecca Rausch

Pollution from the fossil fuels used to provide heat and electricity for our buildings is harming our health, changing our climate and wasting resources. Increasing energy efficiency and replacing fossil fuel heating with clean alternatives in large buildings — including office buildings, apartment buildings, and hospital and university campuses — is one way to make rapid progress toward a zero-emissions future. This bill will require the owners of large buildings to report their energy use to the state each year and make their buildings more energy-efficient over time protecting our health and saving money.

Bill Title: An Act Transitioning Massachusetts to Clean Electricity, Heating, and Transportation, (the 100% Clean Act) H 3288 & S 213

Lead Bill Sponsors: Representatives Marjorie Decker and Senator Joseph Boncore

This bill will transition Massachusetts to 100 percent clean electricity by 2035 and 100 percent clean heating and transportation by 2045. It lays out clear requirements and actions for the Commonwealth to achieve these objectives, while ensuring that workers and environmental justice communities are included in the transition.

Nuclear power is unsafe, too expensive, and alternatives for safer, sustainable energy abound. The one remaining power station in Massachusetts, Pilgrim Nuclear Power station, closed in 2019, yet many questions remain regarding consumer safety and accountability from the station's owners. This bill addresses those issues.

Bill Titles: An Act Relative to Monitoring Dry Casks of Spent Nuclear Fuel, S 1507

An Act to add Section 5K(1) to Section 5K of Chapter 111, H 2254

Lead Bill Sponsors: Senator Patrick O'Connor & Representative Josh Cutler and Representative Kathleen LaNatra

We know that: dry cask storage of spent fuel is safer than spent fuel pool storage; but the casks, each of which contains about ½ as much Cesium-137 as was released at Chernobyl, will be stored onsite for generations, perhaps indefinitely. The containers are subject to corrosion, exacerbated by salt air. Pilgrim station will have 61 casks onsite and the owners have limited plans to monitor them. Requiring monitoring data would provide us with advance warning of potential problems including cracks or leaks, to better protect the public.

Building a Better Democracy

Contact: Janet Domenitz, Executive Director, janet.domenitz@masspirg.org, dcummings@masspirg.org

Our democracy relies on the public's engagement in the democratic process and on their voices being heard above those of special interests. Our state's electoral process is rapidly becoming outdated in an increasingly technological world, and our citizens deserve better.

Bill Title: An Act Fostering Voting Opportunities, Trust, Equity and Security - VOTES Act H 805 & S 459

Lead Bill Sponsors: Representative John Lawn and Senator Cynthia Creem

In the midst of a global pandemic, voters in Massachusetts set a record for the highest turnout election cycle in history, and they were able to do so in a safe, secure, and accessible election. This bill would make permanent many of the temporary changes made during the pandemic that were so successful in generating voter turnout, including universal mail-in and early voting options and same-day voter registration in Massachusetts.

Bill Title: An Act to Modernize Participation in Public Meetings, H 3152 & S 2082

Lead Bill Sponsors: Representative Denise Garlick and Senator Jason Lewis

In response to the COVID-10 pandemic, Governor Baker issued a temporary Executive Order allowing for remote access to public meetings covered under the Open Meetings Law. This change has resulted in a significant increase in civic participation of local municipal meetings. This bill would update the Open Meetings law by making remote access to open meetings a requirement allowing for more civic participation and involvement in local government.

Lowering the Cost of Health Care

Contact: Deirdre Cummings, Legislative Director, dcummings@masspirg.org

Pharmaceutical spending continues to rise, outpacing other health care spending in Massachusetts. The rising cost of prescription drugs are the leading driver in rising overall health care costs affecting consumers, employers, and taxpayers. MASSPIRG is working to reduce health care costs, increase the quality and efficiency of care, and protect consumers from unfair fees and practices.

Bill Titles: An Act to Ensure Prescription Drug Cost Transparency and Affordability, H 729 An Act Relative to Pharmaceutical Access, Costs and Transparency, S 771

Lead Bill Sponsors: Rep. Christine Barber, Rep. Jon Santiago and Senator Cindy Friedman

These bills will tackle the high prescription drug prices by: increasing oversight of Pharmacy Benefit Managers (PBMs), including the rx drug industry in the state's cost review process; establishing a new process to review the prices of certain high cost rx drugs and drugs with steep price increases; engaging drug manufacturers in a process to lower drug prices/improve affordability if prices are found to be unreasonable or excessive; enhancing drug pricing transparency to better understand what is driving the high prices; establishing cost assist programs funded by the drug companies, to make certain medications for chronic health conditions available at low to no cost to the consumer; and ensures consumers know their lowest cost options for their prescriptions at the pharmacy.

Government Spending: Transparency and Accountability

Contact: Deirdre Cummings, Legislative Director, dcummings@masspirg.org

Many of the largest corporations use accounting tricks to shift profits made in Massachusetts to their subsidiaries in offshore tax havens, where they pay little to no taxes. Government studies show that at least 82 of the largest 100 publicly traded U.S. companies maintain subsidiaries in known tax havens. We need reforms that include transparency and consumer protections.

Bill Title: An Act Relative to Closing Offshore Corporate Tax Loopholes, H 2860

Lead Bill Sponsors: Representative Josh Cutler

In order to level the playing field between local, wholly-domestic businesses and their multinational competitors, this bill closes the loopholes that allow multinational companies to shift profits offshore to avoid state taxes. By

moving to the simpler "Complete Reporting" system, companies would no longer be able to misrepresent income earned in Massachusetts by booking it to offshore tax havens. Massachusetts would recoup an estimated \$669 million a year in taxes now lost by booking domestic profits offshore.

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