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2023-2024 Legislative Agenda

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

Each legislative session, we work on bills that advance public interest reforms, collaborating 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 select priorities from our legislative agenda for the 2023-2024 session.

Getting to Zero Waste

Incinerators and landfills are dirty, polluting, and bad for public health. We bury, burn or export more than half of our waste and to make matters worse, much of the waste that ends up in incinerators and landfills is banned by state regulation. 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, S2104 & H3690

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 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, H784 & S477

Lead Bill Sponsors: Representative Mindy Domb 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 150 + cities and towns in our state, including Boston, which have already restricted single use plastic bags.

Bill Title: An Act to Save Recycling Costs in the Commonwealth, H779 & S572

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, H3627 & S1328

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 Americans throw away an estimated 25 billion polystyrene cups every year, or about 82 cups per person. Polystyrene doesn’t degrade, is not recyclable, and 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 in the Environment, H767 & S525

Lead Bill Sponsor: Representative Michelle Ciccolo, Senator Jason Lewis

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 items, restaurants would charge a small fee.

Bill Title: An Act Relative to the Digital Right to Repair, H360 & S142

Lead Bill Sponsors: Representative Adrian Madaro 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 the information 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.

Bill Title: An Act to Require Producer Responsibility for Collection, Reuse and Recycling of Discarded Electronic Products, H871 & S554

Lead Bill Sponsors: Representative Steve Owens and Senator Jake Oliveira

Electronic waste, also known as e-waste, is some of the most toxic waste we dispose of. This bill would regulate the recycling of discarded electronic products, requiring any producer of covered electronics to register with the Department of Environmental Protection. It imposes financial responsibility for collection, transportation, and reuse or recycling on producers, either through reimbursement of collectors or direct collection efforts.

Protecting Consumers

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 are charged too much for products and services due to failures in the marketplace.

Bill Title: An Act Reducing Barriers to Employment Through Credit Discrimination, H1434

Lead Bill Sponsor: Representative Josh Cutler

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.

Bill Title: An Act Relative to the Remediation of Home Heating Oil Releases, H1129 & S648

Lead Bill Sponsor: Representative Jeffrey Roy and Senator Anne Gobi

The bill requires that all homeowners' insurance policies written in Massachusetts include coverage for the remediation of an accidental release of home heating oil, closing a loophole currently in our basic homeowners insurance policies today that covers accidents from other sources of heat like fire and explosions from electricity and gas.

Transforming Transportation in the Commonwealth

Pollution from cars, trucks, and buses harm our health. Vehicle crashes kill 40,000 Americans a year. Further, the transportation sector is the largest contributor to climate change in Massachusetts, responsible for [37% of statewide emissions in 2020](#). Boston is now ranked the [fourth-worst city in the world for congestion](#), with the average driver losing 134 hours — more than five days — to traffic in 2022.

We support policies that reduce the need to drive, promote walking, biking, and mass transit, and electrify buses and cars — so the easiest, cheapest and most pleasant ways to travel are also the cleanest and healthiest.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Bill Title: An Act to Increase Regional Transit Accessibility in the Commonwealth, S2277 & H3727

Lead Bill Sponsors: Senator Susan Moran, Representative Natalie Blais

Regional Transit Authorities (RTA)s provide essential transit services to 250 communities beyond the reach of the MBTA. This bill would provide long overdue funding needed to maintain, improve, and expand regional transit services. The bill seeks to improve governance and information sharing by adding new rider voices to the RTA council and requiring an annual report on service gaps in RTA communities.

Bill Title: An Act Setting Deadlines to Electrify the Commuter Rail, H3392

Lead Bill Sponsors: Senator Brendan Crighton and Representatives Steven Owens and Jennifer Balinsky Armini

It's time to build a fast, frequent, reliable, all-electric Commuter Rail to connect the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. This bill aims to improve service, boost ridership, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by increasing frequency standards and fully electrify the MBTA Commuter Rail system by 2035 using a phased, line-by-line approach.

ZERO EMISSION VEHICLES

Bill Title: An Act Setting Deadlines for School Bus and Public Fleet Electrification, and Programs to Encourage Electrification of Private Fleets, S2218 & H1543

Lead Bill Sponsors: Senator Brendan Crighton and Representatives Christine Barber and Joan Meschino

This bill aims to electrify public and public-serving motor vehicle fleets by 2035 and establish a centralized procurement process for public fleets. It would also establish goals for converting private fleets to electric vehicles and design an incentive program to encourage this conversion.

Bill Title: An Act Electrifying Regional Transit Authorities S2285 & H3366

Lead Bill Sponsors: Senator Jacob Oliveira and Representative David LeBoef

Communities served by Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs) cannot be left behind in the transition to clean and efficient transportation. This bill requires the Commonwealth's RTA bus fleets to be electrified by 2035. It establishes a central planning and procurement office to provide technical and planning support for the electric vehicle bus rollout plans.

Zero-Emissions School Buses

Massachusetts students need a cleaner ride to school. Several bills have been filed to help fund the transition to all-electric school buses. All-electric school buses will help deliver improved air quality, reduced health risks, and progress towards the Commonwealth's climate goals.

- **Bill Title: An Act Promoting Access to Zero-Emission School Buses, S2099**
Lead Bill Sponsor: Senator Cynthia Creem
- **Bill Title: An Act Establishing a Zero-Emission School Buses Grant Program, S2288**
Lead Bill Sponsor: Senator Rebecca Rausch
- **Bill Title: An Act to Promote a Just Transition to Electric School Buses H3769**
Lead Bill Sponsors: Representative David LeBoef

WALK, BIKE, ROLL

Bill Title: An Act Expanding Community Access to Electric Bicycles, H3145

Lead Bill Sponsor: Representative Natalie Blais

Electric bicycles promote public health and protect the environment by reducing emissions and promoting active transportation. This bill establishes the "Community Access to Electric Bicycles Grant Initiative" to finance bike share programs and ownership programs run by municipalities, businesses, and nonprofit organizations.

Reducing Toxic Chemicals

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, S517

Lead Bill Sponsor: Senator Jason Lewis

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. This bill reduces exposure and use of Roundup by preventing the use of Glyphosate and 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, S516 & H813

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.

Bill Title: An Act Relative to Pesticides, S487 & H825

Lead Bill Sponsors: Senator Paul Feeney and Representative Jim Hawkins

This bill would create an online portal and database for pesticide use reporting records with clear, online public access to the annual data and it would require that pesticides be proven safe before being used on playgrounds and fields where children learn and play.

Stop Toxic PFAS

We are exposed to PFAS “forever” chemicals, which are linked to cancer and other illnesses, in water, food, and consumer products. We're working to stop the use of PFAS in consumer products, clean up contamination in our water and communities, and to hold industry accountable for damage they have caused. As of 2/2023, [169 public water systems](#) in more than 90 Massachusetts cities and towns—from the Berkshires to the Cape—have tested above the Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) of PFAS in their drinking water.

Bill Title: An Act to protect Massachusetts public health from PFAS, H2197 & S1356

Lead Bill Sponsors: Representative Kate Hogan and Senator Julian Cyr

This bill bans PFAS in almost all products, starting with food packaging, children's products, fabric treatments, cookware, personal care products, cookware, carpets and rugs, and upholstered furniture and firefighter protective gear by Jan 1, 2026. And all other products must be PFAS free by Jan. 2030.

Bill Title: An Act for relative to toxic free kids, H318 & S175

Lead Bill Sponsor: Representative Jim Hawkins and Senator Cindy Friedman

Requires businesses that make or sell children's products in Massachusetts to disclose toxic chemicals in those products, bans PFAS in children's products, and establishes a process for requiring the removal of additional toxic chemicals from children's products.

Promoting Public Health & Safety

All families and communities should have access to clean air, safe drinking water, and healthy and sustainably produced food.

Bill Title: An Act Ensuring Safe Drinking Water in Schools, H851 & S526

Lead Bill Sponsors: Representative Kate Lipper-Garabedian and Senator Joan Lovely

Lead is a potent neurotoxin that impairs how our children develop, learn, and behave. Yet, according to the lead testing data from the [Department of Environmental Protection](#), more than 80% of the 62,557 taps tested from 1738 schools and child care centers across Massachusetts since 2016 tested positive for lead. The majority (60%) of those lead levels were in concentrations greater than the 1 part per billion (ppb) limit for lead recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

This bill protects children's health by getting the lead out of the water at all schools and childcare centers by

requiring the installation of lead certified filters or water filling stations; and establishing 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 Clean Lighting, H777 & S538

Lead Bill Sponsors: Representative Josh Cutler and Senator Susan Moran

Fluorescent lights are a common sight in offices, garages, and basements—but they contain toxic mercury and use far more energy than newer alternatives. By phasing out fluorescents in favor of efficient LED bulbs, Massachusetts can avert a needless health risk by eliminating 20lbs of mercury waste annually, save families and businesses \$146 million annually on utility bills, and curb greenhouse gas emissions. The bill phases out the sale of most fluorescent bulbs by 2025.

Bill Title: An Act Relative to Better Buildings, H3213 & S2178

Lead Bill Sponsors: Representative Dave Rogers 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 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) H3689

Lead Bill Sponsor: Representatives Marjorie Decker

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.

Bill Titles: An Act to Improve Public Health and Safety Standards in Communities Around Aging Nuclear Power Plants and High Level Nuclear Waste Dump Sites, S1498

Lead Bill Sponsors: Senator Julian Cyr

This bill designates any community within a 50 mile radius (up from 10 mile radius) of an active or inactive nuclear power plant as a Nuclear Power Plan Area expanding emergency planning, and health and safety assessments of inactive plants which store nuclear material.

Bill Titles: An Act Relative to the Discharge of Spent Fuel Pool Water, H2302

An Act Relative to Preventing the Discharge of Radioactive Materials, S442

Lead Sponsors: Representative Josh Cutler and Senator Susan Moran

Establishes a special commission to examine the environmental and economic impact of discharging spent fuel pool water and other waste material from the generation of nuclear energy into any water including bays, coastal water, canals, rivers and streams. It also imposes a moratorium on any of these discharges for up to 2 years until after the issuance of the commission's final report.

Bill Title: An Act Establishing the Hunger Free Campus Initiative, H1293 & S835

Lead Bill Sponsors: Senator Joan Lovely and Representatives Andres Vargas and Mindy Domb

One in three public university students in Massachusetts are food insecure. This bill will create a grant program at the Department of Higher Education to support college campuses across the Commonwealth with technical assistance and funding to alleviate hunger on their campuses. It will offer a roadmap for colleges to take several steps, including creating awareness campaigns, providing enrollment support in food assistance benefits such as SNAP and WIC, establishing on-campus EBT-SNAP vendors, and developing meal-sharing programs.

Building a Better Democracy

Our democracy relies on the public's engagement in the democratic process and on their voices being heard. We're working to improve the electoral process—facilitating access to the ballot box, and ensuring our voting systems are efficient, transparent, and modern.

Bill Title: An Act Making Voting Administrative Changes to Create Equitable Systemic Solutions, S410
Lead Bill Sponsor: Senator Cynthia Creem

This bill would allow eligible people to register to vote any day during which there is voting— up to, and including, Election Day.

Bill Title: An Act Establishing Same Day Registration of Voters, H688
Lead Bill Sponsor: Representative Carmine Gentile

This bill establishes Same Day Registration of Voters.

Bill Title: An Act to Modernize Participation in Public Meetings, H3040 & S2024
Lead Bill Sponsors: Representative Denise Garlick and Senator Jason Lewis

Since early 2020, the Legislature has suspended provisions of the Open Meeting Law to enable public bodies to carry out their responsibilities remotely, with virtual access and participation by members of the public. This has led to higher participation from the public and board members. As good government practices have evolved, many public bodies have combined the best of old and new, enabling both in-person and remote attendance.

When the temporary rules expire, this bill will ensure we don't go back to in-person meetings only under the open meeting law. Instead, this bill will provide greater access to open meetings for everyone — particularly for people with disabilities, caregiving responsibilities, and limited transportation — by allowing officials and members of the public to attend meetings in person or remotely. The bill phases in hybrid meeting requirements by 2030, starting with elected municipal bodies.

Lowering the Cost of Health Care

We live in a country with some of the best hospitals, doctors, and medical technology in the world. But the simple truth is that Americans pay too much for health care and get too little in return. Our healthcare system is riddled with perverse incentives that increase costs without improving quality. We need to start making smarter investments that result in higher-value care.

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.

Bill Titles: An Act to Ensure Prescription Drug Cost Transparency and Affordability, H945
An Act Relative to Pharmaceutical Access, Costs and Transparency, S749

Lead Bill Sponsors: Rep. Christine Barber 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; and ensures consumers know their lowest cost options for their prescriptions at the pharmacy.

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