

ON PARITY BOARD

Achieving diversity on Massachusetts public boards
Coalition led by YW Boston

**AN ACT TO ENSURE GENDER PARITY
ON PUBLIC BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS**
(H.2711 | S.1878)

Sponsors: Representative Patricia A. Haddad and Senator Jason Lewis

WHAT IS IT?

Massachusetts leads the nation in human talent, and our pipelines are replete with women and people of color ready to serve. The data shows we have a long way to go in order to reach gender parity and increased representation of people of color on our state boards and commissions. We need more diverse representation in leadership and governance that broadly reflects the commonwealth of Massachusetts and offers a variety of perspectives on the decisions that impact our community and our future.

THE PROBLEM

Public boards and commissions have outsized impact on the direction of our policies and initiatives on education, health and human services, housing and economic development, labor and workforce development, public safety, and more.

Without various viewpoints and voices to inform these critical decisions, we risk putting in place less effective policies and alienating our diverse communities.

WHY ARE WE FALLING BEHIND?

Reexamining the criteria

There isn't just one "most qualified" person for any position. The criteria itself can be the main structural obstacle to inclusion.

Network limitations

Research shows that individuals tend to hire and promote people who are similar to themselves. Leaders have to go beyond their immediate circles if they are committed to diversity in hiring.



Beware the "Rooney Rule"

Ensuring a diverse applicant pool is not enough. There needs to be accountability and deliberate equitable hiring policies and practices.

Unconscious bias

We all have bias about different groups of people. Selection bias is a structural issue that can be resolved with structural solutions.



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THE FACTS

Women are underrepresented among our key education boards which is an urgent concern given the fact that women are

75%

of teachers
in K-12

94%

of child care
workers

57%

of all higher
education students

In Massachusetts, people of color account for

28%

of the population

but only

7%

of CEOs

and

10%

of chairs
on public boards

Women and people of color account for

52%

and

28%

respectively, of the state's population yet are significantly underrepresented in leadership positions.

On the state's 50 most prominent public boards and commissions, women are just

22%

of the CEOs

34%

of board chairs

39%

of board members

Women of color comprise

2%

of CEOs

and

6%

of board chairs

What would this legislation do if it passes?

Beginning on and after January 1, 2022, the composition of each appointed public board and commission in the Commonwealth shall broadly reflect the general public of the Commonwealth, including persons of different backgrounds, abilities, interests, and opinions including ethnic minorities and women and shall have not less than 50% women board members or commissioners.

As our state and community continues to grow economically and culturally, enacting this legislation would bring about major change across our leadership diversity.

For more information or if you are interested in joining the Parity On Board coalition to support this legislation please visit www.parityonboard.org or contact Stephanie Lajoie-Lubin at slajoie-lubin@ywboston.org.