

March 27, 2013

Joint Committee on Election Laws  
Massachusetts Legislature  
Room 416B and Room 443  
State House  
Boston, MA 02133

To the Massachusetts Legislature Joint Committee on Election Laws:

We, the undersigned state and local Massachusetts-based organizations, submit this letter to express our support of Resolution S 309/H 3185, sponsored by Senator Sonia Chang-Diaz and Representative Linda Dorcena Forry.

The Census Bureau's current practice of counting incarcerated people at the locations of correctional facilities, rather than at their home addresses, undermines the constitutional principle of "one person, one vote." Resolution S 309/H 3185 calls on the Census Bureau to tabulate incarcerated people at their home addresses and provide states like Massachusetts with population data that accurately reflects where state inhabitants reside.

We agree with the Co-Chairs of the Massachusetts Special Joint Committee on Redistricting that "the way prisoners are currently counted does a disservice to the state and should be changed," and that updating the Census Bureau's tabulation methodology is the "most expedient and streamlined avenue" to fixing the problem of prison gerrymandering.<sup>1</sup>

We note that the Census Bureau considers state and local redistricting to be the second most important use of census data, and actively solicits feedback from states on their experiences using Census data for reapportionment. The Massachusetts Legislature's opinion on this matter carries great weight with the Census Bureau, so we urge you to pass Resolution S 309/H 3185.

We thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

American Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts (Boston)  
Arise for Social Justice (Springfield)  
Boston Workers Alliance (Boston)  
Center for Church and Prison (Dorchester)  
Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice at Harvard Law School (Cambridge)  
Coalition for Effective Public Safety in Massachusetts (Boston)  
Common Cause Massachusetts (Boston)  
Dēmos (Boston)  
EPOCA (Ex-prisoners and Prisoners Organizing for Community Advancement) (Worcester)  
Families For Justice As Healing (Roxbury)  
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Economic Justice (Boston)  
Lifers' Group, Inc. (Boston)  
Massachusetts CURE at Global Ministries Christian Church (Dorchester)  
MassVOTE (Boston)  
NAACP, New England Area Conference (West Roxbury)  
Nonprofit VOTE (Boston)  
Norfolk Lifers' Group (Norfolk)  
Oiste (Boston)  
Out Now (Springfield)  
Prison Birth Project (Amherst)  
Prison Policy Initiative (Easthampton)  
Prisoners' Legal Services of Massachusetts (Boston)  
The Real Cost of Prisons Project (Northampton)  
Students for Social Justice and Institutional Change, Smith College (Northampton)

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<sup>1</sup> Senator Stanley Rosenberg and Representative Michael J. Moran, "Report from the Chairs of the Special Joint Committee on Redistricting," December 12, 2012, p. 17.