Massachusetts Ballot Question #3 – Public Accommodation Law

This law adds gender identity to the list of prohibited grounds for discrimination in places of public accommodation, resort, or amusement. Such grounds also include race, color, religious creed, national origin, sex, disability, and ancestry. A "place of public accommodation, resort or amusement" is defined in existing law as any place that is open to and accepts or solicits the patronage of the general public, such as hotels, stores, restaurants, theaters, sports facilities, and hospitals. "Gender identity" is defined as a person's sincerely held gender-related identity, appearance, or behavior, whether or not it is different from that traditionally associated with the person's physiology or assigned sex at birth.

This law prohibits discrimination based on gender identity in a person's admission to or treatment in any place of public accommodation. The law requires any such place that has separate areas for males and females (such as restrooms) to allow access to and full use of those areas consistent with a person's gender identity. The law also prohibits the owner or manager of a place of public accommodation from using advertising or signage that discriminates on the basis of gender identity.

This law directs the state Commission Against Discrimination to adopt rules or policies and make recommendations to carry out this law. The law also directs the state Attorney General to issue regulations or guidance on referring for legal action any person who asserts gender identity for an improper purpose.

The provisions of this law governing access to places of public accommodation are effective as of October 1, 2016. The

remaining provisions are effective as of July 8, 2016.

A YES VOTE would keep in place the current law, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender identity in places of public accommodation.

A NO VOTE would repeal this provision of the public accommodation law.