

## COVID-19 Update from Hampshire Sheriff Patrick J. Cahillane

October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2022

### Allies for Voting

As of 11 am on Thursday, October 6<sup>th</sup>, there are no cases of Covid-19 inside the Hampshire County Jail and House of Correction.

Below is a letter to the editor I have submitted to the Daily Hampshire Gazette:

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To the Editor:

I was delighted to hear from Lois Ahrens recently about the VOTES Act, a state law that is designed to make voting easier for all eligible Massachusetts residents, including people who are incarcerated. I am happy that Lois and some of her affiliated groups are joining the many individuals who support this act, as well as the staff at the Hampshire Sheriff's Office (HSO) who have been encouraging voting for every eligible individual in our care for decades.

I applaud the work of our legislators to bring this law to fruition because removing barriers to voting is good for our democracy. I also applaud Lois for visiting our staff to learn about our efforts to teach civics and encourage voting. Even though the law doesn't take effect until January 2023, it codifies much of what we've already been doing at the HSO. I also applaud our staff for ensuring access to voting information for eligible individuals, especially our law librarian, a paralegal whose resume includes working for the late U.S. Senator Ted Kennedy on voting issues. Our librarian works closely with the Secretary of State's Office and local city and town clerks to gather the various voter registration forms, voter guides, absentee ballots, etc., and makes them all readily available to our eligible population, and helps those who choose to cast a ballot follow through with the process.

It's important to remember that under state law, incarcerated people are eligible to vote if:

- They are awaiting trial on misdemeanor or felony charges, but are not currently incarcerated for a felony;
- They are incarcerated for a non-felony offense;
- They are on probation or parole;
- They are a U.S. citizen, a Massachusetts resident, and 18 or older on Election Day.

On October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020 the HSO sent to all Hampshire County media and state legislators, and posted to our Facebook page, an update regarding our efforts to encourage voting during the 2020 cycle. At that time, our librarian reported that one of our men became emotional when he learned he was eligible to vote, so much so that he called his family to let them know.

This is the fabric of who we are at the Hampshire County Jail and House of Correction. I took an oath to uphold the Constitution, and part of fulfilling that oath is protecting the civil rights of all our citizens, including the men in my care. I believe that voting is an investment in community and family. I believe that the men in our care have a better chance of success if they feel invested – in their families, in their communities, in themselves. I encourage voting because I want those eligible men to feel the civic power of having their voices heard, just like all our friends and neighbors do on election day.

Thank you, Lois, for joining me in this effort.

Patrick J. Cahillane  
Sheriff, Hampshire County