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Ms Joanna MAK
Clerk to Panel on Constitutional Affairs,
Legislative Council Complex,
1 Legislative Council Road,
Central,
Hong Kong.

14 March 2017

Dear Ms MAK,

**Legislative Council Panel on Constitutional Affairs
Supplementary Information on Voter Registration Campaign**

After the meeting of the Panel on Constitutional Affairs held on 23 February 2017, a Member raised concern about the registration rate of eligible persons aged between 18 and 30 and suggested the Administration to consider lowering the age requirement for voter registration (“VR”) to 16 or 17 (while the age requirement for voting remains at 18 or above) with reference to the practices in certain overseas jurisdictions with a view to boosting the registration rate. The following supplementary information is provided for Members’ reference.

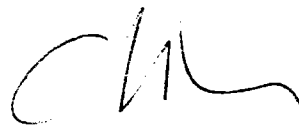
Pursuant to the Legislative Council Ordinance (Cap. 542), a person is eligible for registration as an elector if he/she is a permanent resident of Hong Kong who has reached 18 years of age, holds an identity document and ordinarily resides in Hong Kong. The cut-off date for registration eligibility of reaching 18 years of age refers to the statutory deadline for the Electoral Registration Officer to publish the final registers (“FR”), i.e., 25 July in non-District Council election year and 25 September in District Council election year. For the 2017 VR cycle, the statutory deadline for applications for new registration falls on 2 May 2017. **An eligible young person may apply for VR on or before 2 May if he/she will reach 18 on or before 25 July this year (i.e., the statutory deadline for publishing the 2017 FR).** For example, if an applicant will reach 18 on 25 July 2017, he/she may submit an application for VR to the Registration and Electoral Office (“REO”) starting from 3 May 2016 under the existing electoral law.

Young people have all along been the major target of VR campaigns. The REO appeals to senior secondary students to register as electors through the annual school visiting programme, as well as sending posters and VR forms to secondary schools and soliciting the assistance of the schools to collect VR forms submitted by their students. The REO has also collaborated with the Immigration Department (ImmD) and deployed REO staff to the offices of ImmD where applications for adult identity cards are made in order to encourage young people reaching the age of 18 to register as electors. The REO will continue to enhance publicity measures in VR campaigns to appeal to and encourage young people to register as electors.

The proposal of revising the statutory age requirement for VR involves significant change to the VR system. In fact, subject to different historical, institutional, cultural and other factors of each place, the age requirement for VR and the relevant electoral arrangements in different overseas jurisdictions vary and there is no universal standard. The existing electoral law in Hong Kong already allows young people who will soon reach 18 years of age to register as electors. In addition, the REO proactively adopts multi-pronged and targeted measures to encourage secondary students who will soon become eligible to register as electors. Taking into account the considerations above, the Government has no plan to review the policy regarding the age requirement for VR at present.

Members are invited to note the above.

Yours sincerely,



(Ryan CHIU)

for Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs

c.c. Chief Electoral Officer, Registration and Electoral Office