Advocacy for Policy Change is supported by generous multi-year commitments from Ethics Center International Advisory Board Member Norbert Weissberg and former Board Member Judith Schneider.

Norbert Weissberg and Judith Schneider at “Present and Defend: Projects from Advocacy for Policy Change,” April 2011.

For more information about the projects in this report, visit www.brandeis.edu/ethics/atbrandeis/advocacy

Photos: David J. Weinstein except page 3: Mike Lovett, and page 5: courtesy Massachusetts State House Editorial Assistant: Holly Szafran ’16
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Advocacy for Policy Change: Brandeis students work to reform Massachusetts law
In the spring semester of the 2009-10 academic year I embarked on an experiment with 13 dedicated Brandeis University undergraduate students and the logistical, financial and intellectual support of the International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life, and the Legal Studies Program at Brandeis University. Together we created “Advocacy for Policy Change.”

This course combines an investigation of the ethical dilemmas that arise in the process of lawmaking with hands-on advocacy work at the state level. Students are encouraged to think deeply about the complexities of shaping laws for constituents who hold diverse viewpoints about what is right and good for society and how to best progress through the legislative process. Students choose existing laws they feel could be credibly challenged on ethical or moral grounds, and advocate for state legislative change.

Now in its sixth year, “Advocacy for Policy Change” is dedicated to the creation of citizen advocates: individuals prepared and motivated to create a just society through legislative advocacy. In 2015, we anointed 22 citizen advocates for such issues as workers’ rights, prison reform, and healthcare for women and homeless youth.

Working in teams, the students research their chosen issues and design and implement models of legislative advocacy. State legislators and advocacy organizations advise each team to help them understand the lawmaking process, connect with colleagues, and set realistic goals. Each student completes a series of assignments related to the team’s project, in formats relevant to advocacy work, such as an “elevator speech,” an op-ed, and a short video. (The full list of assignments is on page six.) This anthology contains excerpts from these assignments for each project, updates on the bills and budgetary line items, and links to more information on the relevant issues or organizations.

Once again, I must thank several people whose support over the past six years has been invaluable. This course would not exist without the ongoing support of Professor Richard Gaskins, my mentor and the Director of the Legal Studies Program. He and Daniel Terris, Director of the International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life, took the kernel of a unique idea and made it a reality. Massachusetts State Representative and Brandeis alum Jay Kaufman ’68, MA ’73 helped me create a course worthy of Brandeis University. An expanding list of exceptional teaching assistants made the course a reality: David Duhalde, Andrew Hart, Roz Kabrhel, Melissa Ross, Doug Smith and Cynthia Tschampl.

This year I am pleased to announce a national expansion of Advocacy for Policy Change. Brandeis will help to launch model programs of civic engagement in 15 colleges and universities located in or near state capitals, and will build a national network of students, faculty, activists and legislators. ENACT: The Educational Network for Active Civic Transformation will be a strategic and information hub, linking together state-level advocacy on a national scale.
ENACT will be a major voice in addressing challenges to American democracy by engaging young people around the country in civic activism built on knowledge, cooperation, justice and integrity. This initiative and the national expansion are supported by generous multi-year commitments from International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life International Advisory Board member Norbert Weissberg and his wife, former Board member Judith Schneider, to whom the students and I are very grateful. For more information, see go.brandeis.edu/ENACT.

Brandeis University students are committed to combining academic rigor with hands-on work in pursuit of social justice. Each year a new cohort of advocacy students develops skills that will serve them far beyond one semester. As we prepare for the seventh year of “Advocacy for Policy Change” at Brandeis University and its expansion across the United States as ENACT, we look forward to supporting the next cohort of inspirational citizen advocates.

Melissa Stimell
Academic Program Director, ENACT: The Educational Network for Active Civic Transformation
Professor of the Practice in Legal Studies
Chair, Social Justice and Social Policy Program
Director of Internships, Legal Studies Program
The wonderfully engaged, bright, and energetic students in the “Advocacy for Policy Change” course bring new ideas and new energy to public policymaking.

Grounded in a realistic look at what it takes to advocate for and make significant change in the public arena, they dig into difficult “real world” problems and meaningfully interact with the state’s change agents and would-be (or should-be) change agents.

I have no doubt that their probing questions, insights and ideas have made me a better legislator, and help make for better policy in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

As a Brandeis University alum, I am particularly gratified to have had the opportunity over the past six years to help establish and nurture this valuable course, which continues the Brandeis tradition of active engagement with the pressing issues of the time.

It is, in equal measure, exciting and important to see this program now ready to go national. We’ve created a great model here at Brandeis and the Massachusetts State House, and now are ready to use this experience to seed similar programs in other state capitals and to host a national conversation about improving our policies and our politics.

Representative Kaufman hosting the students of “Advocacy for Policy Change” at the Massachusetts State House, March 3, 2015.
The reports in this volume are excerpted from the material required of each student team in “Advocacy for Policy Change” (Legal Studies 161b) in Spring 2015. The assignments were designed to develop and demonstrate the students’ understanding of the issues and the advocacy process.

**Storybook**
One of the most crucial components of the advocacy process is the sharing of personal stories. For this assignment, students were directed to connect with individuals impacted by their issues and collect and recount their stories.

**Research Report**
The legislative research report is an in-depth document containing facts and analysis of the bill or budget item that a legislator or staffer can reference during the legislative process.

**Elevator Speech**
A prepared advocate should be able to give someone a general idea of the issue and a plan of action within about 30 seconds – the time it takes to ride an elevator. Students were instructed to imagine riding an elevator or walking a hallway at the State House with a legislator or aide.

**Letter to the Legislator**
Ten handwritten (or typed) letters to a legislator have more impact on him or her than 100 emails. The main purposes of this letter to the legislator are to convey that constituents are watching his or her actions on an issue, and to recommend a legislative course of action.

**Script for an In-Depth Meeting with House Ways and Means Staff**
All bills pass through the House Ways and Means Committee for an analysis of their impact on the state budget. For this assignment, students were to write up an accessible and personalized speech to be given in a 5-10 minute meeting with the chair of the House Ways and Means Committee.

**Campaign Journal**
The campaign journal was an opportunity for students to reflect upon at least two substantive meetings with coalition organizations or policymakers.

**Op-Ed**
The op-ed section of The Boston Globe presents a wide array of opinions from community members. Students wrote their own op-ed pieces, sharing their opinions on their advocacy issues in 750 words or less.

**Advocacy Video**
Using either original footage or existing YouTube films, students created “media mash-ups” to present their issues through video.

**Final Oral Presentation: “Present and Defend”**
Bringing everything together, on April 28th, 2015, students gave brief oral presentations of their legislative advocacy projects and responded to questions from audience members.
Nearly three quarters of college expenses are not because of tuition costs, but instead “university fees.” In the current economic climate, public institutions are forced to charge higher fees every year because of two main reasons; inflation and the declining economy. Today, veterans can no longer afford the fees state colleges are currently charging, forcing veterans to find part-time work that barely pays their own bills. This bill will waive both tuition and university fees for all veterans regardless of age, education level or type of service (active or reserve service). Higher education enrollment will allow military personnel increased access to public health services, which they may have not received otherwise.

The Bill
H. 3364: An Act relative to the cost of veterans higher education

Elevator Speech
Our names are Holly Szafran and Liam O’Connor and we’re students at Brandeis University, and we are passionate about an education bill that will support our friends and family who have supported our country: veterans. My father was in the Navy for 6 years, yet he never got the opportunity to attend college while being a resident of Massachusetts because of the high costs of tuition and the low salary given to high school graduates. Our view is that education is the foundation for a higher quality of life, and those who serve and protect our country deserve the chance to receive that education. We adamantly believe that H. 3364: An Act relative to the cost of veteran higher education will not only fund higher education for our heroes, but also prevent them from going homeless, and from suffering from substance abuse and mental health issues. By waiving their tuition fees, our veterans can begin their new life back home. This Bill is an opportunity for our community to support our troops when they return home by giving them the opportunities to succeed back home. In passing this piece of legislation we will be updating
the current law to not only cover tuition but university fees as well. With your support, you will have the opportunity to make a difference to thousands of Massachusetts Veterans who are seeking an affordable way to receive an education; they are our heroes, now it’s your turn to be their hero.

**House Ways and Means Script**

We are here today because we are concerned with the lack of educational benefits given to veterans. I know from personal experience that veterans struggle to afford education when they return home from duty. My father could barely afford to pay his bills, let alone, send himself to school after his service in the Navy. Even with the benefits from the GI Bill and the Commonwealth, my father could not afford the high tuition rates that public universities charge. As a concerned citizen and a student activist, I don’t want the same hardship to happen to today’s veterans as it did with my father. It’s a foolish setback for people who want to continue to contribute to our country as productive workers and responsible citizens.

We have done our research and found that 6 out of 8 members of this committee have either sponsored or co-sponsored a veteran’s benefits bill in the past. Representative Todd M. Smola (D) sponsored HD253, for legislation to establish a property tax exemption for members of the National Guard. This shows he clearly supports benefits for returning veterans. Representative Donald H. Wong (R) co-sponsored HD1436, which was Relative to the payment of veterans’ benefits, showing his support and making sure veterans receive their due benefits. Representative Peter J. Durant (R), Representative Shawn Dooley (R) and Representative Kate D. Campanale (R) all co-sponsored HD2563, which was Relative to income tax exemptions for active duty members of the armed forces, also clearly supporting benefits for active-duty service members. Lastly, Representative Angelo L. D’Emilia (R) co-sponsored HD361, Relative to property tax exemptions for veterans, also clearly believing that our government should be helping veterans when they return home with exemptions and waived fees. We know this committee has a strong record in supporting veteran’s benefits. This Bill should be another example of this committee’s continued support for Massachusetts’s veterans.

As your colleague Representative James Arciero, stated, “fees have increasingly become a greater percentage of overall costs at colleges and universities. When the Veteran Tuition Waiver law was passed in 1991, tuition was much more expensive than the various fees imposed by colleges and universities. This law, therefore adequately covered tuition. However since 2003, college and university fees have risen on average 88.17% and now far outpace the tuition costs which are currently waived for our military veterans and national guardsmen.” The Commonwealth did not anticipate the growth in fees as a part of educational expenses on top of the astronomical rate of increase in tuition costs. In short, this benefit has not kept pace with the actual costs of public education.

H. 3364: An Act Relative to the Cost of Veteran Higher Education will provide full waiver of fees to veterans and current members of the armed forces at all public higher education institutions in the Commonwealth. There will be no time limit on these benefits and no distinction between undergraduate and graduate levels of education. Higher education enrollment will allow military personal increased access to public health services, which they may have not received otherwise. This is beneficial because many returning veterans face issues of substance abuse, PTSD, and suicide. This Bill will help the workforce in Massachusetts by motivating and simplifying the process for military personal to attend school.

**Letter to the Legislator**

My name is Holly Szafran and I am a student at Brandeis University and a resident of Waltham, working on a bill with classmate Liam O’Connor. We are writing to you in support of Bill H. 3364, An Act relative to the cost of veteran’s higher education, which would provide full waiver of fees to veterans and current members of the armed forces at all public higher education institutions in the Commonwealth. In 2007, my family moved to Newton, MA, including my father who is a Navy veteran who served from 1974-1980. He enlisted directly out of high school and served until he was 21 years old. He had the hardest time finding a job when he left the Navy because he never attended college, and unfortunately never had the opportunity to return to school after starting a family because of finances. With the rising cost of college tuition and low amount of educational benefits offered to him, my father could not afford to educate himself after serving his country. Had this bill been enacted several decades ago, my father would have been able to put him and our family on a better path to prosperity.

Like my father, many veterans continue to struggle to educate themselves after returning home from duty. The last veteran educational benefits bill to be passed in Massachusetts was in 1991 with the Veteran Waiver law. As you may know, at that time this law provided
tuition waivers that were effective in the current economy. However, over the past 25 years, both the tuition and inflation rates in Massachusetts have increased significantly. With a rising cost of higher education today, current veterans are quick to feel the economic hardships that come with going to college, thus finding even greater difficulty in reintegrating themselves back home. In 2012 the Washington Post stated reported that unemployment rate for all Americans, and in the same year the unemployment rate for veterans alone was 9.9%. Since 2003, college and university fees have risen on average 88.17%. It is only obvious to conclude that the same benefits given to veterans in Massachusetts back in 1991 cannot be nearly as effective today. Therefore, it is our responsibility to update these benefits to the fighting men and women who served our country bravely.

Furthermore, greater entry into institutions of higher education will allow military personnel increased access to public health services, which they may have not otherwise received. This is beneficial because many returning veterans face issues of substance abuse, PTSD, and suicide. Drugabuse.gov stated that in 2013, 1 in 6 returning veterans suffered from PTSD. This statistic could lower significantly if veterans received education and stayed occupied with schooling and guidance on how to handle their new life back home.

The only counterargument we may come across is this program is too much of a tax burden on the American taxpayer. This program is not just a hand out, but is an investment in Massachusetts’s veterans. By sending our veterans to school, we will be strengthening the Massachusetts workforce and therefore strengthening the economy.

We saw that you have a great legislative history supporting veterans benefits, including; HD1886: Relative to burial benefits of veterans, HD1889: For legislation to prohibit discrimination against veterans in employment decisions and HD1912: Relative to shelter benefits for veterans. We can only imagine where veterans might be without your support. This new Bill 3364 could be a great addition to your already commendable record in supporting our veterans.

Representative Stanley, please talk to your fellow legislators and make sure this bill is voted favorable out of committee.

Thank you for your continued support for our veterans, as I know first-hand how much it means to them.

Excerpts from Campaign Journals

Liam

Shortly after our meeting with [Legislative Aide for Rep. Jerald A. Parisella] Mr. Rodriguez, we walked to the other side of the state house to meet with Henry Kahn, a top legislative aide for Senator Gobi. Right off the bat Mr. Kahn told us that he had very little knowledge of the bill because it was so new, and he wanted us to describe the proposal of the bill and its financial ramifications. After going in depth about the bills proposal, Mr. Kahn was overall very receptive of our information as took very in-depth notes. We asked him a set of questions about Senator Gobi and her thoughts on veteran's education. He assured us the Senator’s passion for this issue and that she would find it very hard to vote against in committee.

Holly

Because Liam and I were the coalition for our bill, we had to reach out to different veteran groups and talk to different veterans about their experience, and what their opinions were on certain decisions and benefits they received. Michael C. Johns is the president for Massachusetts Veterans’ Service Officers Association in Foxboro, MA and served in the Navy for 12 years. For Mike, we were able to talk to him on the phone a couple of times to talk to him to see what his view of the bill was. At first, Mike really didn't know anything about the bill, better yet, he didn’t even know it existed, so Liam and I had to provide him with all the information relative to the bill and also send him the actual bill via email so he could do some research and get an understanding what it was all about. After sending the bill and explaining to Mike what the bill represented, he understood exactly what the bill was for and how it could support him. Following explaining the benefits of the bill, he really did support the bill and for very specific reasons.

Update

As of July 11, 2015, the Senate had concurred and the House had referred the bill to the Joint Committee on Veterans and Federal Affairs.

For more information

View the Bill at: https://malegislature.gov/Bills/BillHtml/143741?generalCourtId=12
There are at least 6,000 unaccompanied homeless youth in Massachusetts who are unable to access affordable medical services because doctors must obtain the consent of their parent or guardian, which these youths obviously cannot provide. The current law does not provide a clear definition of what constitutes a homeless youth or a youth living independently, and worse still, doctors are still not entirely protected under the current law from treating these children, which of course undermines the purpose for which this law was enacted in the first place. This bill is an amendment to a current law that addresses this issue by removing the dangerous ambiguities that are preventing the current law from functioning the way it was intended.

The Bill

H. 2010: An Act relative to the health care of minors

Elevator Speech

Our names are Anya, Nathasha and Josh and we’re students at Brandeis University. We are fortunate enough to have had the opportunity to attend Brandeis University with the support of our families’ financial and emotional support, but we know others are not so lucky. In order to ensure that all youth have the opportunity to contribute to society, basic human healthcare needs must be satisfied. We are concerned that there are at least 6,000 homeless youth who do not have parents or guardians in Massachusetts, who are unable to access affordable medical services because doctors must obtain the consent of their parent or guardian, which these youths obviously cannot provide. When these youths are unable to receive proper preventative care, small injuries and illnesses escalate to expensive and life threatening conditions that could have been avoided.

The good news is that we already have a law that addresses this issue, and would protect doctors from being held liable for treating homeless youths without the consent of their legal guardian. The bad news is that this law must be amended to remove some dangerous ambiguities that are preventing it from functioning the way it was intended. For example, the current
law does not provide a clear definition of what constitutes a homeless youth or a youth living independently, and worse still, doctors are still not entirely protected under the current law from treating these children, which of course undermines the purpose for which this law was enacted in the first place. Think how counterproductive and wasteful it is to hold doctors criminally or civilly liable just for doing their job... especially when they are helping to treat a particularly vulnerable population!

The solution is at your fingertips: our proposed amendment would eliminate these harmful ambiguities, and we would greatly appreciate it if you voted it favorably out of committee. Please help us reform our laws to work as they are supposed to, and please help our homeless youth gain the stability they need to become productive members of society.

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**House Ways and Means Script**

Our names are Joshua Kestin, Nathasha Quiroz, and Anya Kamber and we are students at Brandeis University. Each one of us has had an extremely valuable college experience, but we are acutely aware that our academic success is due, in part, to the fact that our basic healthcare needs have been met. We know that, as legislators, your ability to serve the Commonwealth also depends upon staying healthy. Because we recognize that access to basic medical services is essential for all of us to contribute to society, my colleagues and I are committed to improving our citizens’ access to healthcare.

In particular, we are concerned that the six thousand homeless youths in our state often have difficulty accessing the medical services that they need in order to improve their desperate circumstances, and to become productive members of society. This is because doctors in Massachusetts are often prohibited from treating unaccompanied minors who cannot obtain parental consent. This is particularly problematic because the homeless youth population is especially vulnerable to disease and malnutrition, making it essential for them to be able to receive medical treatment.

Allowing homeless youths to receive medical attention is not only essential for them to have the ability to improve their lives, but it also benefits all of society. The homeless population is especially vulnerable to disease, which poses serious public health risks. In particular, homeless youths are at increased risk of contracting HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. Moreover, if these individuals do not have regular checkups or access to preventative medicine, they are at increased risk of needing far more expensive emergency procedures for conditions which could have been addressed quite easily before they had time to deteriorate. Many studies have shown that investing in preventive care is an essential part of a sustainable, efficient healthcare budget. Furthermore, my colleagues and I believe society thrives best when all individuals have the opportunity to contribute something of their own. We know that helping homeless youth stay healthy is a vital aspect of our commitment to reintegrating them into society; a study organized by the Health Research and Educational Trust found that providing medical care to homeless minors helped to reduce feelings of alienation. The study found that improving access to healthcare increased the youths’ confidence in adult society by helping to convince them that their community was committed to providing for their basic needs, and was not indifferent to their hardship.

Homeless minors need basic medical care to improve their circumstances, so this law is an essential part of our efforts to maintain an inclusive, vibrant Massachusetts community in which all individuals have the opportunity to become actively involved. The current law is vital to this endeavor, but in order for it to function as intended, the language must be updated to ensure that it applies to all unaccompanied youths.

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**Letter to Legislator**

As Brandeis students who reside in your district, we have been very fortunate to be healthy and productive members of the Waltham community. Through basic healthcare services that have kept us healthy and active, we have had the opportunity to contribute to our society in many ways. We hope the same can be said about for you. As a legislator, we appreciate your daily efforts to represent and serve your constituents. However, we are concerned that the opportunity for vulnerable individuals, like unaccompanied homeless minors, to be healthy and hence productive members of society is being compromised.

There are at least 6,000 homeless youths living without parental support or assistance in the state of Massachusetts, and they are often unable to access basic human healthcare services. These unaccompanied minors are more than twice as likely to contract a disease or become injured. They are particularly likely to become victims of sexual assault and to contract sexually transmitted diseases. However, homeless youths are not receiving the medical attention to compensate for their unfortunate living status. Luckily, there already exists a law [General Laws: Chapter 112, Section 12F] that addresses this issue. MA Gen. Law Chp. 112 Section 12F was enacted to increase healthcare access to
unaccompanied homeless minors, however, the language of this general law has prevented it from fully achieving its purpose. For example, MA Gen. Law Chp. 112 Section 12F does not address how long a minor has to be separated from his guardian to be considered unaccompanied and how stable a minor’s financial affairs should be to receive medical services. This is turn has left a population of unaccompanied homeless minors unable to access health care.

As a solution, A Bill Relative to the Health Care of Minors [H. 2010] has been introduced. The bill H. 2010 amends current law by clarifying that unaccompanied minors can receive healthcare services regardless of the length of time they have been living separately from guardian. Additionally, the bill H. 2010 also amends current law by stating that unaccompanied minors should receive healthcare services regardless of financial status. Overall, the bill H. 2010 is a technical change in our current law’s wording to give all unaccompanied minors the ability to access the basic human healthcare services, and in turn will give these youth the stability to rise out of their arduous life conditions and become contributing members of society.

Critics of this bill oppose such changes because they are concerned that it will amplify the amount of unpaid medical bills and minors falsely claiming to live independently to avoid parental consent. However, there are ways to avoid these unintended consequences. For starters, there is no evidence to substantiate false claims of being an unaccompanied minor. There are unaccompanied youth determination documents provided by school district liaisons and homeless shelters that are required to confirm the living status of a homeless youth. Additionally, financial troubles can be avoided by guiding homeless youth to medical clinics that provide medical care at no cost, such as Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program, Boston Healthnet, and Brockton Neighborhood HC.

Overall, to allow an equal opportunity for all individuals to be productive members of society, we urge you to vote bill H. 2010, A Bill relative to the health care of minors favorably out of committee. Please help us in our effort to ensure basic human healthcare for unaccompanied homeless minors.

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**Update**

As of August 3, 2015, the bill was reported favorably by committee and referred to the Committee on Health Care Financing.

**For more information**

Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless
mahomeless.org
Currently in Massachusetts, if a woman who is under 18 becomes pregnant and wishes to terminate the pregnancy, her only options are to obtain consent from parents or from a court. However, many young women in this situation do not feel safe or comfortable going to their parents and the process of a court hearing compromises confidentiality and can be very humiliating. Because this process takes so long, it can also cause a young woman to delay necessary care or miss her chance to get a legal abortion while she is under 24 weeks pregnant. This bill will change the age of consent for abortion from 18 to 16 and will allow teenagers younger than 16 to turn to an adult family member over the age of 25, an authorized health care provider, or a professional counselor.

**The Bill**

H. 2070: An Act to improve health care for young women

**Elevator Speech:**

My name is Lieba Hall and this is my partner Ruth Fertig and we are students at Brandeis University in Waltham. In order to foster a healthy community, it is our responsibility to enable youth to make healthy and responsible decisions. Right now in Massachusetts, minors who become pregnant must obtain consent from their parents if they feel that it is not in their best interest to carry the pregnancy to term. Unfortunately, for multiple reasons, it is not always realistic for a young woman to go to her parents when she is in this situation. Studies have found that young women who do not feel safe or comfortable going to their parents will often delay necessary care, thus putting their health at risk or compelling them to obtain an unsafe procedure. Studies also show that parental consent laws do not lower abortion rates. So expanding the range of options for a young woman in this situation can only benefit our community by improving women’s health and safety.

The Act to improve health care for young women would give a young woman this important range of options to allow her to
make the best decisions regarding her health. This bill would lower the age of consent for abortion to sixteen so that older teenagers can make healthy, responsible decisions in confidence. It would also allow youth below the age of sixteen to turn to other family members who are better equipped to make responsible decisions regarding their health. In the case that a young woman feels she has no one in her family who will make a decision in her best interests, the bill would also allow her to seek guidance and consent from a professional counselor or authorized health care provider.

An Act to Improve Health Care for Young women will expand the opportunities and ensure the health of young women throughout Massachusetts. Will the representative speak to the chair of the Joint Committee on Public Health and ask them to give this bill a speedy hearing and vote it favorably out of committee?

■ Letter to the Legislator

My name is Lieba Hall and I and my fellow student, Ruth Fertig. We attend Brandeis University in Waltham. I study Sociology and Ruth studies Sexuality and Health Policy. Our studies have caused us to be passionate about the following bill, which would expand healthcare opportunities for young women. We are reaching out to you in support of the Bill H. 2070 “An Act to Improve Health Care for Young Women.” This bill would lower the age of consent for abortion from eighteen to sixteen, and allow teenagers under sixteen to get consent from members of their family other than parents, from a licensed counselor, or a professional counselor.

The current law mandating the age of consent for abortion is inconsistent with other Massachusetts laws regarding reproductive health. Young women do not need to be a certain age to consent to other health services, including prenatal care, childbirth, treatment of STDs and substance abuse, and medical care for their child. The fact that minors have the right to consent to medical procedures for their child, but not to certain procedures for themselves seems counterintuitive. If minors able to take on the responsibly of being a parent and make decisions for their child, so to they are clearly mature enough to decide for themselves if carrying the pregnancy to term is their best interest. Another issue with the parental consent law is that not all adolescents and young adults are comfortable discussing their health issues with their parents. Perhaps the most uncomfortable subject is sexual health. We both feel this dilemma on a personal level. Ruth has a sixteen-year-old sister, and she feels that her sister would only be comfortable confiding in her in this type of situation as opposed to their parents. I also remember being sixteen and I along with my peers, all growing up in very religious households, knew we could not turn to our parents in support of an abortion that our community vocally advocated against.

In addition, the American Medical Association and the American Association of Pediatrics have stated that young women who do not feel safe or comfortable going to their parents will often put their health at risk by delaying necessary care, or even obtain a dangerous back alley abortion. Studies have also shown that parental consent laws do not lower abortion rates. Furthermore, if a teenager who becomes pregnant is forced into motherhood because she is unable to obtain an abortion, it will greatly hinder her chances of even graduating from high school, let alone obtaining higher education. The Department of Health and Human services has found that by age 22, only about half of young women who become mothers in their teenage years receive a high school diploma, compared with 90% of women who do not give birth during adolescence. Giving these women more accessibility to obtain an abortion would directly correlate to their higher educational achievement and opportunity.

Thank you for taking the time to read our request. We are requesting you advocate for Bill H. 2070 “An Act to improve health care for young women” to be voted out of committee favorably and to go to a hearing. Please let us know your stance on this bill and feel free to come to us with any questions.

■ House Ways and Means Script

My name is Ruth Fertig, and I and my colleague, Lieba Hall are students at Brandeis University in Waltham. Today we would like to talk to you about fostering healthy communities. In order to do this, we must enable youth to make healthy and responsible decisions. This requires providing them with a large range of health-related options. Yet there is one group that is not afforded these options. Many young women in Massachusetts are unable to obtain certain necessary reproductive services.

Although young women may consent to most types of reproductive care at any age, those under 18 must have parental consent or the consent of a judge at court in order to terminate a pregnancy. Unfortunately, not all youth live in homes where it is safe for them to go to their parents with these types of issues. The only other choice currently available is for a young woman to take her plea to a court judge in hope of their consent. This process can be both overwhelming and scarring for a young teenager. In addition, a judge will not know the teenager personally and
may not be able to make a truly informed decision about their best interests. These problems with the current law are our reason for coming to you ask for your support with House Bill 2070, an Act to Improve Healthcare for young Women. In supporting this bill, you are helping expand the opportunities and ensure the health of young women throughout Massachusetts.

Young women in MA need more options to ensure that they have access to the type of health care that is in their best interests. This bill would provide that by permitting teenagers sixteen and over to consent to abortion for themselves. It would also allow those younger than sixteen to obtain consent from other adult family members or a professional counselor.

Studies have shown that parental consent laws are detrimental to the mental and physical health of young women. The American Medical Association and the American Association of Pediatrics have stated that young women who do not feel safe or comfortable going to their parents will often put their health at risk by delaying necessary care, or even obtain a dangerous back alley abortion. Additionally, contrary to the intent of the law, parental consent laws do not lower abortion rates. Furthermore, it has been found that since the parental consent law was adopted in 2009, the rate of minors going out of state for care has risen by 300%. At the same time, abortion rates in Massachusetts have not decreased significantly. Finally, it has been found that teenage childbirth greatly reduces a young woman's education opportunities. The Department of Health and Human services has found that by age 22, only about half of young women who become mothers in their teenage years receive a high school diploma, compared with 90% of women who do not give birth during adolescence. Also, because many of these young women do not complete their education, they may end up with low-paying jobs or being supported by state welfare. Giving these youth more accessibility to obtain an abortion would directly correlate to their higher educational achievement and greater participation in the workforce in the future. This, in turn, would allow them to pay more in taxes and contribute to revenue for the state government rather than being paid for by it as adults.

Furthermore, in 2010, the Massachusetts state government paid $138.3 million to fund unintended pregnancies of women who could not afford reproductive care on their own. Greater access to abortion for youth would save the state money because there would simply be fewer pregnancies for it to fund.

Will the members of the House Ways and Means Committee speak to members of the Joint Committee on Public Health and ask them to bring this bill a speedy hearing and vote it favorably out of committee. Thank you.

**Excerpts from Campaign Journals**

**Ruth**

On our second visit to the statehouse, one office Lieba and I knew we had to go to was the office of the Committee on Public Health. Our bill had been sent to this committee and is still there now. We knew that the house chair, Representative Hogan, was identified as pro-choice by NARAL but hadn’t specifically backed our bill. So we wanted to make sure we spoke to her or her staff. We had called ahead, and when we came to the office and asked the secretary she actually got one of Rep. Hogan’s staff and a staff member of another representative to come out. They were all very nice and told them what bill we wanted to talk about and launched into our elevator speech. I said the first part of the speech, but our first try at presenting the bill was a little disjointed because we hadn’t specifically delegated who would say what. … When we finished the initial pitch, the staff that was not for Rep. Hogan told us that his representative already backed the bill [which we actually knew] and excused himself. Rep. Hogan’s staff stayed and listened intently to us, and took notes, which made us feel like we were really being heard. Lieba told one of the stories we had collected, and I illustrated a little more of what the bill would do. Then we got her card, thanked her, and left. Afterward we sent follow-up emails to her and everyone else we talked to with the fact sheet for our bill that we had gotten from NARAL.

**Lieba**

An influential meeting I had for my bill which is “An Act to Improve Health Care for Young Women”, was with Jamie Sabino on March 5, 2015, we had a two hour long phone conversation. Jamie Sabino is an attorney who has worked with Planned Parenthood since the 80’s. She is the co-chair for the “judicial consent for minors lawyer referral planning committee.” She has represented many minors and currently trains lawyers to take on minors’ cases. In addition she trains lawyers in other states to challenges unfair laws against minors including abortion laws. She relayed stories to me of individuals who could have been affected by my bill being passed and who suffered because of parental consent laws for abortion. After our conversation, she sent me follow up information on more stories. Overall, I collected many stories and was a lot more educated on my Bill and the many lives it being passed would affect. After our conversation I passed on the many stories to Hailey, my NARAL contact who logged the stories I collected for a bigger story telling campaign NARAL is working on. I felt that the meeting went well and that I had gained an ally. I emailed her later on with several questions she happily answered. I think that the
only thing that could have worked better is that I wish I could have met with her in person because sometimes hearing her on the phone was difficult.

**Update**

As of September, the official record noted that there was a hearing on the bill scheduled for June 2, 2015.
Advocacy for Policy Change: Brandeis students work to reform Massachusetts law

Women’s Health and Economic Equity

Ensuring that insurance companies provide cost-free birth control for women

Rebecca Balk ’15
Hannah Porter ’16

Some national insurance companies have found ways around the Affordable Care Act (ACA) mandate to cover contraceptives, and are still charging women co-pays for certain types of contraceptives. First, there are still private health insurance plans that are considered “grandfathered” by the ACA, as long as these plans do not change covered benefits, cost sharing or the plan premium, they do not need to update their plan to provide cost-free birth control.[1] Furthermore, under the ACA, private insurance plans are still allowed to use “reasonable medical management” to limit what types of birth control they offer cost free. This bill will set more stringent guidelines for insurance companies so that the ACA’s promise to provide cost-free birth control will be fulfilled for all Massachusetts women.

- The Bill

H.948/ S.483: An Act relative to women’s health and economic equity

- Elevator Speech

My name is Rebecca Balk and this is Hannah Porter and we are students at Brandeis University, and I am a resident and registered voter in Hamilton MA. As young women attending a prestigious university, we recognize how fortunate we are to be here. An integral part of our arrival as college students has been support from our parents, whether financial, emotional, or academic. We are lucky to have parents who were able to make family planning decisions, so that they could have children at a time when they could provide strong support. Healthy individuals create healthy families, which contribute to healthy communities. Contraception does more than allow women to have sex without the consequences of pregnancy. Additionally, contraception is important for women’s equality and economic success in the workforce, as it gives a woman the option to time pregnancies when she wishes.

The Affordable Care Act and Massachusetts General Laws protect a woman’s right to receive birth control without
cost sharing. However, the current language on the law leaves room for insurers to make choices about which forms of contraception they want to provide to women. Just like a woman has the right to choose whether to use contraception for responsible family planning, a woman should be able to choose which form of contraception she will use. No form of contraception is right for every woman, so protecting a woman’s right to choose which form she uses is essential. It is essential that we support laws that protect individuals’ rights to make responsible decisions about their health.

Today we are advocating for bill S.483, An Act relative to women’s health and economic equity, which will solve this problem. As the ACA stands, there are loopholes that insurers use to provide women with a limited range of FDA approved contraceptives. This bill will ensure that women have cost-free access to the birth control method of her choice, by creating a law with clear and deliberate language that will mandate coverage of the full range of FDA approved contraception without cost-sharing, effectively closing these loopholes. As a voter, a resident of Massachusetts, and as a woman, I believe that this bill will improve the lives of individuals, families, and communities in Massachusetts. Please consider supporting this bill; talk to your colleagues at the state house and encourage them to support it as well. I ask that you hold a hearing on this bill as soon as possible, so that it can take the next step towards becoming a law.

**Letter to the Legislator**

Today, I am writing as a concerned woman, college student, and Massachusetts voter. Access to the full range of FDA approved contraceptive methods is essential in order for a woman to be able to make responsible decisions about her health. Both the Affordable Care Act and Massachusetts General Laws protect a woman’s right to receive birth control without cost sharing. However, insurance providers are utilizing loopholes in the law to limit which forms of birth control are available without co-pays.

I believe bill H. 948/S. 843: An Act Relative to Women's Health and Economic Equity, will ensure that women have cost-free access to the birth control method of her choice, by creating a law with clear and deliberate language that will mandate coverage of the full range of FDA approved contraception without cost-sharing. As a pro-choice legislator and the father of a young woman, supporting this bill is an opportunity for you to show support for women's health and equity.

Not only does this bill affect the health of communities in Massachusetts, but it affects economic opportunities for women across the commonwealth. Claudia Goldin’s research shows that access to contraceptives “encourages later marriage and greater career investment,” giving women the option to delay social obligations in order to pursue higher education or work towards career goals. According to Jane Herr, “for women who have their first child after they enter the labor force, a one-year delay leads to 3 percent greater wage growth over the first 15 years worked, or as much as 5

**House Ways and Means Script**

It is essential that we, the residents and legislators of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, continue to support individuals’ rights to make responsible decisions about their health. If we limit which forms of birth control are available to women, then we are limiting the ability for a woman to make responsible decisions about her health. This bill, H.948- An Act Relative to Women’s Health and Economic Equity, will ensure that women have cost-free access to the birth control method of her choice, by creating a law with clear and deliberate language that will mandate coverage of the full range of FDA approved contraception without cost-sharing. As a pro-choice legislator and the father of a young woman, supporting this bill is an opportunity for you to show support for women’s health and equity.
percent among the college educated.” Therefore, the ability to plan pregnancies is essential for a woman when she is advancing in the workforce, and is therefore instrumental in her economic success. In order to protect economic equality for women, we need to protect women’s right to choose when and whether to have children.

The Affordable Care Act and Massachusetts General Laws protect a woman’s right to receive birth control without cost sharing. However, the current language on the law leaves room for insurers to make individual choices about which forms of contraception they want to provide women with. Firstly, there are still private health insurance plans that are considered “grandfathered” by the ACA: as long as these plans do not change current covered benefits, cost-sharing or premium costs, they are not mandated to update their plan to provide cost-free birth control. Furthermore, under the ACA, private insurance plans are still allowed to use “reasonable medical management” to limit which types of birth control they offer cost free. This means that insurance companies can categorize contraceptives by their own definitions, and choose to offer only one form of birth control for each category. For instance, some insurers categorize the pill (taken orally once a day) and the ring (inserted once every 3 weeks) as the same form of birth control, and provide only one.

Insurance companies that utilize “reasonable medical management” are exploiting loopholes in the ACA. A woman, not an insurance company, should have the ability to choose which birth control fits best into her life, and is best for her health. A woman may consider birth control for a variety of reasons: for health benefits or to prevent unintended pregnancies that might disrupt family unity, cause economic distress, or prevent her from pursuing her career goals. When deciding whether to use contraception, a woman must consider her health and the health of her family, as well as the cost and availability of different methods of contraception. Unfortunately, her best option might not be accessible because of insurance restrictions, which puts her health at risk.

There is a cost to making things “free.” However, this cost will not be borne by the Massachusetts state government. In 2013, Governor Deval Patrick signed into law the state’s FY 2014 budget, which supports full implementation of the Affordable Care Act, including the Medicaid expansion. As a result, MassHealth has already expanded coverage to include cost-free coverage of all FDA approved birth control methods. This bill will not cost the Massachusetts State any additional money, because the provisions of this bill are already funded through Medicaid and Medicaid expansion.

Therefore, the cost of this bill will be borne by private insurance companies, not public funds. There is little reason to be concerned that this bill will cause an increase in insurance premiums for consumers. Both the National Business Group on Health and Mercer have both cited contraceptive coverage as a cost-saving option for private insurance companies. In 2012 the federal department of Health and Human services released a brief which stated, “The direct costs of providing contraception as part of a health insurance plan are very low and do not add more than approximately 0.5% to the premium costs per adult enrollee. However, as indicated by the empirical evidence described above, these direct estimated costs overstate the total premium cost of providing contraceptive coverage. When medical costs associated with unintended pregnancies are taken into account, including costs of prenatal care, pregnancy complications, and deliveries, the net effect on premiums is close to zero.” Not only is this bill budget neutral, but it will not increase cost for consumers and it will save private insurance companies money.

Frankly, I believe this issue extends beyond the costs as it affects the health and opportunities for women all over Massachusetts. Thankfully, we do not have to choose between supporting this bill and choosing to be fiscally responsible; supporting this bill is fiscally responsible. I ask that you hold a hearing for bill H.948, an Act Relative to Women’s Health and Economic Equity, as soon as possible, and report the bill favorably out of committee.

[Note: Footnotes in the original were not included in this excerpt.]

### Excerpts from Campaign Journal

#### Rebecca

This was our very first meeting with a legislator about our bill. We choose to speak to Rep. Timothy Madden because he is on the Committee of Financial Services, as well as the Committee on Ways and Means. When we arrived at his office, Rep. Madden was busy, so we spoke to a staff member, Rebecca, about our bill. Rebecca seemed genuinely interested in what we had to say.

The best piece of feedback we got was that Rep. Madden was interested in co-sponsoring the bill but had chosen not to support our bill originally because the bill text was too long. It made me realize how important conciseness is when it comes to communicating with legislators. I felt that Hannah and I were able to effectively communicate the major points of the bill, and provide a better understanding of the effects of the bill. Rebecca, felt that Rep. Madden would be interested in supporting the bill, and would pass the information along. For our first experience lobbying, I felt that Hannah and I did really
well. I wish that we had been more proactive about editing our storybook, and research report. It would have been nice to leave Rebecca with something to pass along to Rep. Madden.

Hannah

This initial meeting with Hailey (from NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts) gave me insight into ideas for our storybook and was a forum to swap information about the bills. The meeting was myself, Hailey, and about 3 other people from the class who are working with NARAL supported bills. I met with Hailey because she works for NARAL and is former Brandeis student who took this class, so I thought she would be a helpful resource. Hailey came with information from NARAL in the form of fact sheets that she distributed to everyone at the meeting. This fact sheet has become very useful in projects for the class that require the use of digestible knowledge.

As I've become more knowledgeable about the bill, I've found myself having to think hard before I speak to others about it because I have to make sure the information I give isn't too detailed and is understandable for someone who has never heard of the bill or doesn't know Massachusetts law. The fact sheet Hailey gave me has been useful for sorting out the most important facts and for language about the bill that is straightforward, factual, and understandable. Becky and I ended up finding the information and people we needed to speak with, so I didn't follow up further with the woman at Hampshire College, but perhaps should have. Other than that, this meeting with Hailey was very helpful at the beginning of the project, and established my ties with NARAL for future meetings.

- Update

As of September, the official record noted that a hearing on the bill was scheduled for July 21, 2015.

For more information

Massachusetts Chapter of the National Organization for Women (Mass NOW)
massnow.org
Confidential Healthcare

Ensure that all insured Massachusetts residents can access and receive confidential healthcare coverage

Emma Farber ’16
Riayn Rosenstock ’15
Kaitlin Wang ’15

Many insured Americans, particularly young adults, minors, and victims of domestic violence, are forgoing essential medical care out of fear that their insurance policyholder (their parent or their abuser) will find out. They will either choose to postpone their treatment or seek care at a free clinic. Postponing treatment causes conditions to worsen, risking the individual’s health, and increasing the cost of treatment when he or she eventually seeks care. Utilizing free clinics eats away at public resources meant for uninsured and underinsured. This bill will ensure that all insured Massachusetts residents can access and receive confidential health care coverage.

■ The Bill
H.871: An Act to protect access to confidential healthcare

■ Elevator Speech
Hi, we’re Riayn Rosenstock, Emma Farber, and Kaitlin Wang, and we are student at Brandeis University concerned about our and our peers’ ability to access essential medical services. We have seen first hand that despite doctor-patient confidentiality laws, medical confidentiality is threatened, particularly for us as young adults on our parents’ insurance plans. Minor and young adults on family health plans, such as college students like us, routinely forego vital health services because our parents can access all of our supposedly confidential health information. The problem is that our peers are putting themselves at risk by not seeking the proper testing and treatment for STDs, reproductive issues, substance abuse, mental health issues, and sexual assault, all because they’re afraid of their parents finding out. In order to address this privacy gap, we are advocating for H.871, An Act to Protect Access to Confidential Healthcare. This bill would allow for the patient (not the insurance policyholder) to choose how and to whom insurance forms are delivered, giving them control over their own health information. Insurance forms will also use more generic terms that don’t divulge all of our medical details. If you believe in protecting healthcare confidentiality, we ask that you support H.871 and vote this bill favorably out of the Financial Service committee.

Emma Farber ’16, Riayn Rosenstock ’15 and Kaitlin Wang ’15
Hello Representative Dempsey and other members of the Ways and Means Committee, we are Emma Farber, Riayn Rosenstock, and Kaitlin Wang, and we are students from Brandeis University. We have been working with NARAL and Health Care for All to advocate for H.871, an act to protect access to confidentiality in health care. As young adults still on our parents’ health insurance plans, we understand the relationship between privacy and access to vital health services. Even as minors, we expected our healthcare providers to protect our private health information and not reveal it to our parents without our consent. However, the insurance company shares that information with the policyholder through a form known as an Explanation of Benefits, or EOB. This form is only sent to the primary policyholder of the health insurance policy, and lists the specific services that someone on their health insurance policy received, whether the services were covered by health insurance or not. It is meant to provide transparency in health care billing, but it inadvertently created privacy concerns because someone besides the person listed on the form can view that form to learn about someone else’s health conditions. As a result, many young adults choose to forgo essential medical care because they know their insurance policyholder can access their health information.

This problem affects everyone under a health insurance policy, which is mandatory to have in Massachusetts. The groups most affected by this issue are minors and young adults on their parents’ health insurance, people with substance abuse or mental health issues, people with reproductive health concerns, and victims of domestic abuse. One in three insured dependents cite confidentiality concerns as their primary reason to not use their health insurance. Similarly, about one in five insured women obtaining care at a family planning center stated that they were not planning to use their insurance coverage because of confidentiality concerns. Let’s say, for example, that one of your children had a substance abuse problem and wanted to seek treatment, but didn’t want you, the parent, to find out about it, either because they don’t want you to worry about them or they are nervous about how you would react. They would discover this confidentiality issue with health care billing and be forced to make a choice: either they get the health services they need through their insurance and risk you finding out about it when the Explanation of Benefits arrives at your address, as you are their health insurance policy holder, or avoid using their insurance altogether and rely on alternative health options like public clinics. In the worst-case scenario, they cannot get treatment at all and risk their issue getting worse because they cannot afford it and no other alternative options exist. They are forced into making a choice that harms their health in order to protect their privacy as long as this gap exists.

This bill would add more confidentiality between the patient and the insurance company, and would allow more people to feel comfortable about using their insurance. First, if the patient does not owe any money for the treatment, the insurance company will not have to send the EOB. Second, if they do have to send an EOB, the patient can choose the method by which they receive it, whether it be to a new address or electronically. And third, the EOB will use general language for sensitive treatments rather than highly specific language, which would prevent outside people from figuring out exactly what medical care they received. These added stipulations would allow for less risk of exposure of someone’s health care services to unwanted parties, and would make people feel they can use their health insurance without having to worry about a confidentiality breach.

My name is Riayn Rosenstock and I am writing you because I am passionate about my health care remaining a private matter between my health care provider and myself. I am working other passionate students of the Brandeis community who can relate to or have experienced the challenge of dealing with private health issues. I believe every person deserves privacy in regards to their personal health. Insured minors and young adults still are reluctant to use their insurance because they fear being stigmatized or harmed. I am sure this is an issue within your beloved Waltham Public Schools because I know that it is an issue in other districts, such as Concord, where my cousins attend high school. In 1996, the Federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA) was established, ensuring confidentiality of health care information for insured dependents, however, medical confidentiality is still not completely guaranteed. I am writing to ask for your help with passing Bill H.871, An Act Relative to Protecting Access to Confidential Health Care. By passing this bill, minors and young adults can be provided with the privacy they deserve.

I spoke with a representative, JoJo, from the Sidney Borum Jr. Health Center, a clinic that provides safe, non-judgmental care for young people ages 12–29 who may not feel comfortable going anywhere else. He explained how mostly every patient of the center is insured, but chose to come to the clinic to receive treatments they did not feel comfortable receiving from their own doctor. He shared a story about a young woman who did not want to have a
child, but her husband was adamant about it, so she did not seek birth control under their combined health insurance plan, because he would find out. It is a shame that this woman felt that she could not use her insurance, and had to go to Sidney Borum instead. He also explained that Sidney Borum, like most public clinics, survives off of public dollars, in addition to some private money, therefore, when one goes to a free clinic when he or she is already insured, it defeats the purpose of having health insurance, and uses up public dollars that could be used to help uninsured patients. I can understand how, as a member of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means, you would want people to make choices for their health that represent a responsible investment. Our bill is one important step in ensuring such an investment.

This bill would bridge the confidentiality gap between patients and health plans in the following ways. First, if the patient does not owe any money for the treatment, the insurance company will not have to send an explanation of benefits (EOB), which details the treatments that the patient received. Second, if they do have to send an EOB, the patient can choose the method by which they receive it. And third, the EOB will use general language for treatments rather than highly specific language such as “Doctor Visit” or “Medical Treatment,” which prevents others from figuring out what treatment they received. Although this legislation may seem costly, as insurance companies will have to restructure current practices and a third party auditor may be necessary for the billing process due to the loss of transparency between policyholder and provider, the long-term effects of this legislation will offset these costs. By detecting diseases and illnesses early on, insured individuals and hospitals will not incur more severe, long-term costs from diseases that have worsened over time.

With your help, all residents of Massachusetts can be confident that their health care privacy will not be violated. By voting to pass bill H.871 in the House, you will allow everyone in Massachusetts to utilize the health care guaranteed through their insurance provider without fear.

Excerpts from Campaign Journals

Emma
On April 2nd, Riayn, Kaitlin and I met with Alyssa Vangeli at Healthcare for All, one of the coalitions working on our bill. Riayn had been referred to Alyssa when she reached out to Health Care For All with questions about our bill earlier in the semester. The meeting took place in the Health Care For All office in Boston. We reached out to Health Care For All in order to get more answers for our longstanding questions about the bill: how will this act deal with insurance billing issues? What costs will insurers incur? What savings will public clinics experience?

Alyssa was extremely helpful in discussing these questions with us. She was able to answer our questions about billing issues better than anyone else we had met with, which was relieving because it was an issue we had been grappling with all semester. She did not have a lot of information about the costs to insurers and cost savings to the public, but we had found some statistics about public clinics and we were actually able to provide valuable information to Health Care For All, which will continue to do research on the costs and cost savings.

Riayn
Emma and I met with Hailey Magee, an Organizing Manager at NARAL Pro-Choice, in Einstein’s located in the SCC [at Brandeis]. The purpose of our meeting was to better understand the context of our bill and to develop a list of legislatures that we should contact and meet with on our visits to the State House. We also wanted to develop a connection with one of our coalitions early on so we could better connect with/access the coalition throughout the semester. Meeting with Hailey early on in the semester worked out well because we were able to work with her to understand specific details about our bill and she provided us analyses/ratings of legislatures that we used during both of our State House visits. What we could have improved on is we should have emailed her our questions ahead of time so she could have spoken with NARAL and received direct answers before she met with us. Additionally, it could have been more productive if we met Hailey in the NARAL office because when we met in Einstein’s we had many interruptions by other students in our class and friends that said “hi” when they saw us in passing.

Kaitlin
We contacted Senator Bradley and were told to drop by. Emma chose Senator Bradley because he had supported domestic violence-related bills in the past. We spoke with his staff member, Anestis Kalaitzidis. He hadn’t heard of the bill but figured that Senator Garrett Bradley would be interested because he worked with anti-domestic violence bills. What went well was that because he didn’t know of the bill, and we had more practice with presenting the bill, we could present it to him easily and we focused on the domestic violence piece, which I knew a lot about because of Caitlin’s capstone. It would have been better if we could have met with the senator, so he would know about it directly. We left him with HCFA’s fact sheet and our contact information, and he gave us his.
Update

As of September, the official record noted that a hearing on the bill was scheduled for July 21, 2015.

For more information

Health Care for All Massachusetts
hcfama.org
Supporting Victims of Sexual Assault on College Campuses

Establishing a new set of information services in support of victims of sexual violence on college campuses

Libby Panipinto ’15
Krista Guintoli ’15

This bill will complement federal requirements such as Title IX and the Clery Act by establishing a new set of information services in support of victims of sexual violence. It will further educate the community about sexual violence by requiring the university’s sexual assault policies to be sent to each student every semester via email and by mandating sexual violence training for students and faculty. It will provide information to be released in each institution’s annual crime report, and call for the creation of a public safety log in partnership with the Title IX Coordinator. Furthermore, it will require university websites to provide information for resources available to victims of sexual violence. This bill calls for unbiased proceedings in all cases concerning sexual violence, and provides support for the victim throughout such proceedings. The bill will also require a memorandum of understanding with sexual assault crisis services and law enforcement, as well as the implementation of a Threat Response Program for emergency communications. In further support of victims of sexual violence, this bill requires the option for anonymous reporting and the presence of a trained confidential advisor. Lastly, this bill will appoint a public safety officer to the Board of Higher Education to review campus policies. Together, these implementations will not only provide support and justice for those who have experienced sexual violence, but will help prevent future incidents through education. This bill will enact change on college campuses in order to destroy the stigma against sexual violence reporting so that those who experience such trauma are not further attacked by their friends, the university itself, and the larger community.

The Bill
HD. 3220: An Act concerning sexual violence on higher education campuses

Elevator Speech
Hello, my name is Libby and this is Krista and I am a student at Brandeis University. As you are aware, sexual violence on college campuses is a pervasive problem. A college environment is meant to be a safe space — a community. As a college
student, I want to be able to learn in a community that protects all of its students as promised to me by Title IX and the Clery Act. The current state of the higher education system allows for 1 in 5 college women to be the victims of sexual assault during her academic career. A new bill will ensure that proper action is taken to educate students, install preventative programs, and create an educational environment that allows survivors of sexual violence to thrive without fear of harassment, violence and discrimination. It will provide best practice for administrations to follow, and a minimum standard for all universities to comply with. While this is a step in the right direction, this bill lacks an enforcement clause and therefore does not take measures to discipline universities who might ignore the law. Without punishment for the failure to comply, colleges have little incentive to enact the new policies and the legislation will inherently fall short on its promises.

Will you speak to your colleagues on the committee to support an amendment to this bill that lays out enforcement guidelines? We need to hold institutions accountable for the welfare of their students.

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**Letter to the Legislator**

We are Krista Giuntoli and Libby Panipinto, residents of Waltham and students at Brandeis University. As a father of five children, we are sure that you prioritize safety throughout their educational experience. We are working to ensure the safety of all children that come to Massachusetts for the opportunity of higher education by protecting them against sexual violence and providing them with the resources to change the culture that promotes an unsafe atmosphere. We need statewide standards for sexual violence prevention and intervention. Every 21 hours, there is a rape on an American college campus. Six universities in Massachusetts alone are under Title IX investigation. For these six schools, as well as many others, it took the mishandling and mistreatment of victims for changes to be made. By ignoring sexual violence, we are compromising the safety and education of our students.

Colleges are ill-equipped to provide proper support and appropriately address the aftermath of sexual violence due to a lack of both resources and knowledge. We need legislation to proactively fight sexual violence and combat the stigma that blames victims and silences survivors. While schools are beginning to work under Title IX requirements, due to the varying size and financial situation of each institution, schools are handling it differently, and some very poorly. Even worse, there are schools doing nothing at all. We need a minimum threshold set by the state so that universities know what needs to be completed and how to do so. Representatives Tricia Farley-Bouvier and Daniel M. Donahue are sponsoring H.1041, that will not only reinforce Title IX, the federal civil rights law prohibiting sex discrimination in education, but will also bring prevention and intervention services to a population that so desperately needs them.

Despite all the necessary steps laid out in this bill, it lacks enforcement. Without language laying out consequences for not following this law, universities will not only take their time establishing the necessary components, but will also overlook certain elements entirely. When institutions of higher education are under a level of scrutiny, those institutions will be forced to take positive action. Our students need help and Massachusetts has the opportunity to be at the forefront of this movement.

This bill may receive significant backlash from universities that will claim they do not have the resources to establish the required services or absorb negative consequences; however, it is crucial universities make this a priority. Our students need help and Massachusetts has the opportunity to be at the forefront of this movement.

We request that you please speak with your colleagues in the committee considering this bill to amend it in order to ensure that when a bill that addresses sexual violence in Massachusetts passes, it is passed with as much effectiveness as possible. Thank you for your time. We trust that you will consider it with the attention it deserves.

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**House Ways and Means Script**

Mr. Chairman, as a father of three, we know you value the safety and well being of your children. Every parent wants what is best for his or her children: the opportunity to learn and grow in a safe, community environment. Safety should be a fundamental human right; however, it is not. As you are aware, sexual violence on college campuses is a pervasive problem. The current American university allows for 1 out of every 5 female students to be sexually assaulted during her academic career. Clearly, schools are not doing enough to protect the safety and well being of their students. Massachusetts needs to address these issues in our own schools and seize the opportunity to be leaders of this movement. Then, just as you protect your own children, this state can ensure the protection of all the students who come here in order to receive a great education. In doing so, we are supporting college students now and for generations to come.
An Act concerning sexual violence on higher education campuses, H.1041, will ensure that colleges undertake best practice when it comes to intervention and prevention services provided for their students. Under Title IX and the Clery Act, these institutions are already required to provide basic services and handle these situations in a timely and appropriate manner. Unfortunately, due to the varying size and financial situation of each institution, schools are handling these matters differently, and some very poorly. Smaller schools are now starting to train faculty, but due to their small infrastructures, they have not prioritized this issue by hiring the necessary staff. Larger, well-funded institutions may be working to provide properly trained staff, but are not educating students in order to change campus dialogue and prevent these crimes in the first place. And even worse, there are schools doing nothing at all.

This bill would prevent such disparities from occurring by setting minimum thresholds by which all universities must abide. First and foremost, the legislation provides guidelines for intervention on behalf of victims. These schools must have trained faculty, the option to a confidential resource, better protocol for investigation and adjudication processes, and access to on and off campus resources for student and faculty survivors. Another critical component of this bill is the prevention programming through education of students and partnerships with local law enforcement. By involving everyone on campus, from students to administrators to campus police, change is possible.

Despite all the necessary steps laid out in the bill, it lacks enforcement. We are further advocating for an enforcement clause to be added to this bill in order to hold universities accountable for their actions. Without language laying out consequences for not following this law, universities will not only take their time establishing the necessary components, but will also overlook certain elements entirely. When institutions of higher education are under a level of scrutiny, those institutions will be forced to take positive action. In order to establish language for enforcement, we have collected precedent from both Title IX and the Clery Act. Title IX is enforced by the Office for Civil Rights (OCR). The OCR conducts compliance enforcement by investigating and resolving complaints filed by those who have been harmed by violation of Title IX. Through these complaints, the OCR is able to handle these issues of misconduct and remedy any discrimination that has occurred.

As it is currently laid out, the bill will not affect the state budget in any way. This bill puts the responsibility on the institutions themselves to fund these mandates internally. The only responsibility for the government is to establish a higher education campus safety advisor, however, this cost will be no more than a salary and training: a very minimal cost compared to the need. Furthermore, this position can also be absorbed by a current employee of the Department of Higher Education. While universities may argue that is it unfair for them to bear the burden of the costs, it is a necessity for any institution to provide the designed services. Universities are meant to foster a healthy and safe community where students can learn and find inspiration, and this cannot happen without the regulations in the bill. Furthermore, it is the cost of a non-profit status: since universities are non-profits and therefore receive tax write-offs, they have a larger responsibility to protect their community and should be spending that money that they do not owe the state on protection and prevention instead.

If the enforcement clause is created, this may require the state to put forth funding in order to provide an oversight authority. Whether this means designating new staff to follow up with universities or designating this role within the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education or within the Attorney General’s office, the government will need to play an active role in the enforcement of these policies. Because this financial burden will depend on how the amendment looks, it is unclear what the cost will be. The state can ask universities to cost-share in this issue, but it may be necessary for the state to pay for the creation of an enforcement mechanism.

This is a persistent problem across America that is often ignored. President Obama’s task force on sexual violence released recommendations that universities should adopt, but they have not been turned into laws. With the number of universities in the state, Massachusetts is in a powerful position: we have the opportunity to prioritize the safety of our students, to set an example, to make a change in our nation, and be at the forefront of the movement.

Excerpts from the Campaign Journal
Krista
As soon as Libby and I chose a bill on college-level sexual assault, we knew that we should speak with Sheila McMahon, the Brandeis Sexual Assault Services and Prevention Specialist. Ms. McMahon was incredibly helpful to us, especially in the beginning stages of this project. She told us how many of the legislation’s mandates were now being implemented at Brandeis and highlighted several key factors of bringing these changes to colleges. First, she notified us of huge discrepancies in services and culture between small, large, private, public, different infrastructures, and varied funding. And
since several schools across Massachusetts and many more nationally are under Title IX investigation for mishandling sexual assault cases, there will continue to be great inconsistencies. School faculty play an important role in these issues and with an increasing demand for these services in general, staff already assigned to sexual assault on campus will see workloads increase tenfold. In these cases, administrative tasks such as training and establishing resources will take precedence over providing direct services to student victims. Ms. McMahon pointed all of these out to us as very practical obstacles to successful implementation of prevention and intervention resources on a higher education campus. We were able to bring this information to legislators as potential reasons of pushback from universities in the commonwealth.

Ms. McMahon was able to tell us what has encouraged these changes at schools already. At Brandeis, it was a dedicated group of student activists demanding change and at schools like Harvard and MIT, it was the threatened sanctions of Title IX infringements. This shows that, in any case, enforcement and accountability are absolutely necessary components of legislation dealing with sexual assault on college campuses. Therefore, we changed the direction of our advocacy from support of the bill with a proposed amendment to include an enforcement clause. Without this information, I believe that we could not have been nearly as successful in our discussions with legislators and their aides and thus our advocacy.

Libby

Our meeting with Jessica Ellison (Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner [SANE]) also provided us with some interesting information. She informed us on how the SANE program works throughout Massachusetts, and the various forms it takes based on location. The SANE program provides victims of sexual violence with trauma-trained nurses who specialize in handling rape kits in a sensitive way. The program allows victims to find comfort throughout an otherwise uncomfortable process. Many of the major hospitals in the greater Boston area have a SANE department, giving them the ability to treat any victim of sexual violence in order to ensure a smooth process.

We had hoped to learn about her interactions specifically with college students and the impact of funding to her program, however, most of the information she provided was more general. While we had hoped to gain more from the meeting, it was interesting to hear from a medical perspective, as this bill designates that universities must be able to provide information on and enter partnerships with groups that can handle the medical aspect of sexual violence. She also informed us that UMass Amherst’s health clinic is a designated SANE center. This was interesting to hear, not only because access to SANE locations is less common in the western part of the state, but also as a program template that other schools could adopt. Having a SANE program at college clinics all over the state could have a large effect on the support these students receive, and it was helpful to hear what other institutions have done.

■ Update

As of September, the official record noted that the Joint Committee had scheduled a hearing for the bill on June 3, 2015.

For more information

Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services, Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE)

mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dph/programs/community-health/dvip/violence/sane
Massachusetts Bail Reform

Create a pretrial services division, and train workers how to operate in the new system

David Harari ’16
Hannah Marion ’16
Daniel Moskowitz ’15

This bill will shift Massachusetts away from a cash bail system, and instead use a risk-based system. The current cash bail system uses one’s wealth to decide if one should go free as opposed to one’s potential risk to commit another crime, or to show up for trial. In the new system, probation officers will evaluate people and give a recommendation to the judge regarding pretrial status. These officials will make their recommendation based on the individual’s risk of committing a crime while awaiting trial and the risk of not showing up for trial.

- The Bill

H. 1584: An Act reforming pretrial process

- Elevator Speech

Ensuring public safety is the ultimate goal of our state government and the criminal justice system. The monetary based bail system in Massachusetts leads to the unnecessary detention of many low-risk people accused of crimes, while at the same time allowing dangerous individuals to re-enter their community simply because they can afford bail. Additionally, this broken system overcrows Massachusetts’s jails, which costs taxpayers unnecessary millions each year. Bail is supposed to be used to ensure that people show up to trial. However, the current cash bail system does not achieve this fundamental goal. Wealth is not proportional to flight risk. Yet, the current bail system prioritizes one’s income over their potential danger to society.

We are asking you to support An Act Reforming Pretrial Process (Bill H. 1584), which uses a risk assessment method to create a more efficient probation system that prioritizes the safety of society. This bill will create a Pretrial Services division within the Office of Probation. Probation officers will assess one’s risk and give a recommendation to the judge. This type of responsible planning can save the state millions of dollars, reduce the prison population, and build safer communities. We are asking you today to vote this bill favorably out of committee.


## House Ways and Means Script

Senator Spilka and Representative Dempsey, our state cannot afford to continue financing its broken bail and pretrial process. Our country is built on the basic principle that each citizen should have equal rights and equal opportunity, regardless of their socio-economic status. Someone who is accused of a crime should not be denied freedom because he/she cannot afford bail. A growing number of states are reforming their pretrial systems in the name of both equal opportunity and responsible planning. In Maine, these reforms have led to a 98.8% appearance for court dates, a 93% public safety rate, and decreasing costs. Massachusetts needs to follow their lead and reform our bail process.

The current bail system is monetary based. This results in the pre-trial incarceration of over 5,000 people daily in Massachusetts, which is costing the state millions. Bail is meant as insurance that a defendant will be present in court for his or her trial. Wealth is not proportional to flight risk, so why are wealthier individuals being favored over lower income citizens? The state needs to return to the original purpose of bail and protect equal opportunity.

An Act Reforming Pretrial Process [Bill H. 1584] can remedy this inefficient and unfair process. Probation officers will use a newly implemented risk assessment method to aid in their recommendation to the judge on whether or not an individual should be offered bail. This risk assessment tool will take various factors into account: the accusation, criminal record, and social and professional situation. This will allow the judge to make a well-informed decision. Judges will still retain the final decision.

According to estimates based on data from other states with similar reforms, implementing this type of bail reform will cost Massachusetts approximately ten million dollars. Some people may contend that the cost of the bill is too high and that the state should use its budget on something other than freeing potential criminals. However, while this bill has a high short term cost, over the course of several years it will save the state approximately thirty million dollars. As mass incarceration decreases the state will not need to pay the extravagant funds to keep one imprisoned. Others may argue that the state is letting criminals go free until their trials, which endangers their communities. However, the state is currently releasing potential criminals solely based on their ability to pay bail. It is far safer to have a system that releases people depending on risk rather than economic status.

Mr. Chairman, we are asking that you vote this bill favorably out of the Ways and Means Committee in the name of community safety and responsible planning. This decision will save the state money that is currently lost by overcrowded detention centers and serve as a positive modification to Probation Services and justice system as a whole.

## Letter to the Legislator

My name is Daniel Moskowitz and I am a senior and Brandeis University. As a registered voter in your district, I am writing to you today to discuss pre-trial bail reform in Massachusetts. Specifically, I would like you to support An Act Reforming Pretrial Process (Bill H.1584). This legislation will create a more efficient and equitable bail process.

I am asking for your support because I know you share these values. As a co-sponsor of HD 2089, legislation to promote the use of restorative justice practices, you are keenly aware of the need to reform the criminal justice system. Acts such as restorative justice and pre-trial bail reform will alleviate the overcrowding of the Massachusetts jail system and ensure that all citizens, regardless of wealth, are treated equally before the law.

The current bail system in Massachusetts forces many low-risk people accused of crimes to go to jail for no reason other than that they can not afford bail. The existing process puts an emphasis on incarceration and not public safety. Such a mechanism incorrectly assumes that low-income defendants are more likely to commit a crime, or not show up for their trial. The bail reform act will implement a new system that will use a risk assessment method to determine who should go free pre-trial and who should be in jail. This type of reform has been adopted by multiple states already and has a proven track record. States such as Maine and Washington D.C. have proved that moving away from a monetary based bail system can save the state government millions of dollars. In both of these places, crime and recidivism rates have dropped and more than 80% of individuals attend their court date. Jails are also not as overcrowded as they used to be because there are far fewer pretrial inmates to house. Instead of spending unnecessary dollars incarcerating citizens who cannot post bail, the state can allow those who do not pose a risk to society to continue with their lives as they await trial.

I encourage you to fully support this bill and to work on helping it pass by defending it in front of your peers and the Judiciary Committee. Our communities need this reform and our state needs these savings.
Excerpts from Campaign Journals

David

At the beginning of our class’ last visit to the State House, my group and I met with Representative Paul Tucker, from Salem and a member of the Joint Committee on the Judiciary. We learned that Representative Tucker was in the police department for 32 years as a detective before retiring as Police Chief. His perspective on bail and pretrial issues was unique and insightful. We created a connection with him, handed him our legislative research report and discussed the issue for about twenty minutes. Representative Tucker was receptive, wanted to find out more about the problem and offered to help us by giving us the contact information of his friend Frank Cousins, the Essex County Sheriff. It was very rewarding for us to have an unplanned and impromptu meeting be as relevant and helpful to our project. Hearing from legislators with different backgrounds, expertise and points of view helped make our understanding of the situation more complete and clear.

Hannah

Daniel, David, and I met with Representative Carvalho’s aide in his office at the State House to discuss our bill with him and to encourage him to get Representative Carvalho to vote for the bill. The aide did not know much about the bill, so we spent most of the time explaining the bill to him. More than other aides we had met with before, he asked a lot of substantive questions about the bill and how it would impact the current system, specifically highlighting judges’ jurisdiction and other concerns he had regarding the information we provided him with. It was really great to see the growth that we’ve had as a group in this meeting, as all of us were able to answer every question he asked and also point to places in our legislative advocacy report that offered statistics and information regarding his questions.

I think we were very well prepared for this meeting and Carvalho’s aide gained an understanding of the bill and its importance that he lacked before. One thing that perhaps would have made the meeting even better would be being able to give him our storybook to show to Representative Carvalho, because realistically Carvalho probably doesn’t have time to read the full report. Another thing we probably could have done better is be more pushy about the importance of the bill and create a greater emotional impact on him because I felt we were perhaps a little too straightforward about presenting our information and didn’t offer real emotional reasons for supporting this bill.

Daniel

On March 12, my group and I had a phone call with Rachel Corey of the Criminal Justice Policy Coalition (CJPC). This meeting was set up to update Rachel on what we were doing in regards to bail reform. Rachel also updated us as to what was currently happening with bail reform bill. Rachel talked about the legislative aspect of bail reform. Rachel told us that the bill was headed to the Judiciary Committee. A helpful tip from this meeting was Rachel’s insight that the Senate was pretty on board with the legislation, but the House needed more convincing. This helped shape our lobbying strategy as we targeted more House members. We spoke about the need to study the news and see what is happening in representatives’ districts that would affect their views on bail reform. From this we started researching House member’s districts and targeting those with high levels of crime in their cities. Rachel also provided us with specific information about certain members’ views on the bill, including Brownsberger, Rosenberg, and Fernandez.

After discussing the state of the legislation and giving us lobbying advice, we spoke about what we can do to help the efforts of the CJPC. This included both lobbying efforts and campus events. ... Overall, this was a great meeting because I learned a lot about the legislative process and got some useful tips in lobbying. Just like the meeting with Norma of the Massachusetts Bail Fund, this phone call was formative in my process of fully grasping the efforts of bail reform and how to be an effective advocate on its behalf.

Update

As of September, the official record noted that a hearing was scheduled for the bill on June 9, 2015.

For more information

Criminal Justice Policy Coalition

cjpc.org
In many ways, Massachusetts is a prosperous state. In 2013, Massachusetts had the 6th highest median income in the nation, and has an educated populace, with above average high school graduation rates and residents with bachelor’s degrees. Despite these impressive statistics, Massachusetts remains one of the least affordable states in the country. Cost of living and housing affordability are some of the worst rates in the country. Along with this, Massachusetts has a problem with income inequality. The commonwealth has the eighth largest gap in the country between the incomes of rich and poor workers. This bill would look to raise the Massachusetts state earned income tax credit to 50% of the federal level, supporting working families in the Commonwealth.

The Bill

H. 2479: An Act improving the earned income credit for working families

Elevator Speech

Hello my name is Josh, and this is Rose and we are students at Brandeis University. We all want to make sure that full time workers who play by the rules shouldn’t be in danger of living on the streets. Instead we should be making sure that our communities provide people with the opportunity to raise their standard of living and climb the economic ladder. The Earned Income Tax Credit [EITC] is one way that we can ensure that the economy works for everyone. As an economics major and volunteer at a local homeless shelter I have seen first hand how raising the EITC can help those who are working in low wage jobs from experiencing homelessness and poverty. In an age of growing income inequality we need to strengthen the most effective anti-poverty program in Massachusetts that strengthens working families. The EITC provides a tax credit to low and moderate-income workers and supports over 400,000 households in the lowest income bracket. Currently Massachusetts is considering legislation, SD 1110, that would raise the state EITC from 15% to 50% of the federal EITC level. This would give Massachusetts the highest EITC in the nation, cementing us as a leader in supporting working communities.

Raise the Earned Income Tax Credit

Raise the Massachusetts state earned income tax credit to 50% of the federal level, supporting working families in the Commonwealth

Joshua Berman ’15
Rose Wallace ’16

Rose Wallace ’16 and Joshua Berman ’15
Letter to the Legislator

As a champion of working families you continue to provide opportunity to all Massachusetts residents by co-sponsoring legislation to ensure workers get paid a living wage. As students from Brandeis University, we are writing to you because we are concerned the high cost of living is leaving members of the Waltham community behind. In 2013, 26% of households were severely cost-burdened meaning they paid 50% or more of their gross income on rent. Specifically in Waltham, 10.1% of residents live below the poverty line according to the Census Bureau. Overall, Massachusetts has the eighth highest rate of income inequality in the nation.

Recent proposals in the State Legislature to expand the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) are an opportunity to stand up for working families. Currently, Massachusetts is considering H.2479/S.1477 An Act Improving the Earned Income Credit for Working Families. This bill would raise the state EITC from 15% to 50% of the federal EITC level. This would give Massachusetts the highest EITC in the nation, cementing us as a leader in supporting working communities.

Expanding the EITC has a number of benefits including increased housing stability and healthier living habits. For example, money from the EITC can help prevent homelessness, and is also linked to higher educational outcomes for children. In addition, studies have shown that the EITC creates a multiplier effect, recipients stimulate the economy by spending a large portion of their refunds on immediate expenses.

You have been a strong ally to working families in the past and we are hopeful that you continue to stand with us moving forward. Senator Michael J. Barrett is already co-sponsoring the legislation and we hope Waltham legislators vote in lockstep to promote economic opportunity. We urge you to talk to your colleagues and publicly support H.2479/S.1477 and help raise standards of living both in our district and across Massachusetts.

House Ways and Means Script

We are here today because of our concern for working families being left behind in our economy. We’ve seen your dedication to Massachusetts working families through your co-sponsorship of the Act Relative to Economic Development Reorganization. Today, 11.9% of your hometown, Haverhill’s, population is earning wages below the poverty line.

As Chair of Ways and Means you know that budgets are about making choices. As students at Brandeis University, we care deeply about our community in Waltham as well as communities across the commonwealth. Because of this, we want to ensure that Massachusetts makes the choice to support all members of the community.

In 2013, 26% of households were severely cost-burdened meaning they paid 50% or more of their gross income on rent. Currently Massachusetts has the eighth highest rate of income inequality in the nation. Also, state taxes in Massachusetts are regressive so low and middle-income residents pay a larger portion of their income in taxes than the top twenty percent of residents.

Recently, the Joint Committee on Revenue held a hearing about increasing the EITC. One of the women who testified, Tomasa, spoke about how the EITC allowed her to escape the cycle of poverty. I had the opportunity to speak with her one-on-one. She told me that over the years she worked a variety of low wage jobs saving as much of her salary and EITC refunds as she could. Finally in 2006 with the help of her EITC refunds Tomasa was able to put a down payment on a house in Boston. She and her husband rent out a room in their house to supplement their income, giving them economic security and putting their income above the minimum level to earn the EITC. When Tomasa told me about the EITC her eyes lit up with pride that she was able to keep fighting and achieve her American dream.

The bill we are advocating for today is H. 2479, An Act improving the earned income credit for working families. It has three main provisions, the first is increasing the state EITC from fifteen percent of the federal credit to fifty percent. The second is directing the Department of Revenue to engage in an extensive promotional campaign to ensure all Commonwealth residents who are eligible for the EITC claim it. The third is allowing certain victims of domestic violence and abandoned spouses to access the credit. Since tax refunds going to low-income people go straight back into the economy, this bill will bring an additional economic stimulus of approximately 208 million dollars into Massachusetts according to the Children’s Health Watch.

Another crucial part of strengthening the economy is keeping our families healthy.

The EITC will continue to improve health outcomes even further if we pass H. 2479. A study done by the Federal Reserve in 2013 shows that EITC recipients buy more fruits and vegetables and other healthy food items during the months refunds are paid. EITC expansions are also linked to reduced rates of low birth weights as well as a variety of educational outcomes for low-income children including test scores. Experts in the health profession are very passionate about and recognize the importance of the EITC. In fact, the Children’s Healthwatch, which is a nonpartisan network of pediatricians, public health researchers and children’s health care policy experts, are part of the coalition advocating for this bill. They agree that
as one in seven children in the commonwealth lives below the poverty line, expanding the EITC is an essential way to invest in the future and health of our great state.

The Children's Health Watch projects this bill would cost the Commonwealth 260 million dollars. Some may argue that this is too much but most of this money would go right back into the community, acting as an economic stimulus. In addition to this, the increase in wages will allow families to choose healthier options, which could cut costs in our health care budget. As we said earlier budgets are all about choices, expanding the EITC should be a legislative priority because of its positive economic, health and educational impacts.

As Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, we know that you have the power to ensure that legislation is passed through the Massachusetts state house. With bold leadership and strong political will, we can ensure that our money goes to working families. According to the Brookings Institute, in your district over 3,500 residents filed for the earned income credit in 2013. By supporting H.2479, in the 3rd Essex district alone, you can increase EITC refunds from $8 to $12 million. With your help we can stand in support of Massachusetts working families and make sure the economy works for everyone. Will you talk to your colleagues about H.2479 and ensure expanding the EITC to 50% is a budget priority.

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**Excerpts from Campaign Journals**

**Josh**

Senator Eldridge is the lead sponsor in the senate of the Act to improve the earned income credit for working families. Because of this, Rose and I decided to schedule an interview with him for our EITC movie. I think that we had a very good strategy around getting him to do the interview. We had already visited his office before when we emailed him to ask for an interview. In addition to this, we followed up on the email in person, when we visited his office last week. These meetings ensured that Senator Eldridge would take time out of his busy day to sit down for a short interview. After meeting with his office and scheduling with his communications director I got to sit down with the Senator to ask him a few questions. I was struck by how his answers were not very “wonky” at all. He didn’t spend much time talking about the technicalities of the bill, instead he spent a lot of time talking about what the consequences of this bill would be for working families. He was appealing to the emotional aspect of a struggling family rather than the macro level impacts that the policy would have on the state. This seemed to be an effective way of communicating why the bill should be passed. Rather than focusing on numbers he focused on the people. I think that the interview went really well. I was really happy with his call to action. It was compelling and it worked well in our video.

**Rose**

Our first meeting was with Luz Arevalo and Lydia Edwards of Greater Boston Legal Services (GBLS), and this meeting was primarily for Josh and I to introduce ourselves to Luz and Lydia and hear about their work on Senator Eldridge's EITC bill thus far. Josh and I also explained the structure of our class, the kind of assignments we would be working on and our time commitment. Lydia told us that she helped write the section of the bill about victims of domestic violence. Luz gave us a binder she’d been using to collect information about Senator Eldridge’s EITC bill. It had a list of co-sponsors, members of each committee, legislative caucuses and a copy of the bill and some fact sheets. Later in the meeting, Luz asked us to make a spreadsheet with all of the members of the Joint Committee on Revenue (the committee the bill will likely go to), with columns for their district and if they are co-sponsors. Then as we have meetings with legislators we can record if they support the bill or not. Luz also said she would connect us by email with a woman from the Brazilian Women’s Group, as she might have clients that are interested in lobby for the bill. It would allow us to make sure we had people in a variety of districts calling their representatives about our bill.

Overall this meeting was pretty successful, Josh and I did a good job clearly defining what our role would be in the project and that we were happy to take on side projects from GBLS if they were substantive. I also think that GBLS was excited we would be going to the State House and lobbying for the bill since it will allow them to develop a more thoughtful legislative strategy through our insight. At this meeting I think we built up a good rapport with Luz and Lydia, it was evident they appreciated our knowledge of the bill and passion for working on it. Luz and Lydia both agreed to try and set me up with clients I could interview for the storybook assignment.

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**Update**

As of September, the official record noted that a hearing was scheduled for the bill on March 31, 2015.
Driver’s Licenses for People Without Social Security Numbers

Eliminate the requirement of a social security number for obtaining a driver’s license

Kenyon Fraser ’16
Nathan Needle ’15

Current state standards require a social security or visa number prior to being granted a driver’s permit or license, yet many immigrants cannot provide such documentation. These drivers cannot obtain insurance, thus posing a problem to other operators and placing the onus on law enforcement to apprehend residents who are more than eager to take part in the legal process. This bill would prohibit the Registrar of Motor Vehicles from denying a prospective applicant due to lack of a social security number, therefore making immigrants able to obtain a license and, by association, liability insurance.

■ The Bill
H.2985: An Act relative to safe driving

■ Elevator Speech
Hello my name is Nathan Needle, and this is my colleague Kenyon Fraser. I am a registered and frequent Massachusetts voter. We’re students from Brandeis University and we would like to speak with you about the Safe Driving Act.

For the safety of our communities, it is essential that all drivers be trained and insured. Due to their immigration status many hard working Massachusetts residents are unable to obtain a driver’s license.

Many drivers are more than willing to obtain licenses, but are unable to due current legal qualifications. The Safe Driving Act would allow such residents to obtain a license that would qualify them for insurance, while also documenting a previously undocumented portion of the population and increasing revenue within the Commonwealth. This helps the law enforcement community be safer when encountering members of their community and not be expected to be primary enforcers of Federal Immigration Policy. The Safe Driving Act will also add to the revenue of the state by allowing a new portion of the population to purchase a driver’s license, potentially adding to the RMV’s budget and allowing for shorter wait times. Please favorably vote An Act Relative to Safe Driving out of committee.
Members of the Ways and Means Committee and Chairman Dempsey, my name is Kenyon Fraser and I, along with my colleague Nathan Needle, a Massachusetts voter, are students at Brandeis University. I am writing to you today about an issue concerning the safety of Massachusetts citizens. Nathan and I are not just students, we like many others in this state are drivers.

We drive on the roads of Massachusetts expecting certain protections. All drivers in Massachusetts are required to take a test to ensure that they are able to safely operate a motor vehicle. All drivers are required to have auto insurance in order to reduce the exorbitant costs of accidents on the roads. However, portions of the workers vital to the Massachusetts economy are unable to obtain a license or insurance. I am speaking about the people within this state whose immigration status prevents them from legally obtaining a drivers license. These are people who through no fault of their own are forced into a situation where they must either drive “unlicensed, untrained, and uninsured” or be unable to take advantage of basic services and opportunities that are promised to all. H. 2985, An Act Relative to Safe Driving offers a solution by allowing immigrants to obtain a temporary, visually distinct drivers license.

This winter has proven that public transportation is not always a reliable means to get to and from work. This bill does not just affect immigrants. Their inability to follow the law presents a hazard to all drivers on the road. While driving, people like Nathan and myself expect that others behind the wheel have the same training that we do. We expect that should an accident occur that the costs will be manageable because all involved parties are insured. When uninsured drivers get into accidents they raise costs for other drivers on the road. H. 2985, An Act Relative to Safe Driving would make this possible for all Massachusetts residents. 10 other states have already adopted similar laws. It is time for the Massachusetts Legislature to take the step forward to ensure that it is responsibly managing the people it represents and to help protect the safety of everyone on the roads.

Excerpts from Campaign Journals

Kenyon

Sean Getchell was the legislative aide for Representative Ryan and was an incredibly useful resource for the Safe Driving Bill. He provided a new angle on the bill that we had largely not thought about before speaking with him, specifically how the bill affects the Irish population in Massachusetts. Events like Immigrants Day focused primarily on issues that white English-speaking immigrants are not obviously struggling from. Very few Irish immigrants are struggling to learn English, but they still need to obtain a driver’s license in order to join the workforce, and face the same struggles as other immigrants when working towards this goal. He was able to give us some behind the scenes indicators as to the state of the bill and the difficulties going back and forth between the House and the Senate. In addition to this information Sean was also able to connect us with the International Irish Immigration Center, an organization dedicated to helping recent immigrants to the United States.

Nathan

Kenyon and I arrived at Immigrants’ Day just as the speakers were getting underway. In addition to the Safe Driving Act, multiple other pieces of legislation – both state and federal – were at the forefront of the day’s activities. We were greeted at the door by Johanne, who was happy to meet Kenyon and make sure it would be all right for us to film. The first three speakers did not touch upon the issue at great length, but the fourth, Zoila Lopez from Waltham, provided great insight (not to mention footage for the video). Lopez, a victim of domestic violence in her native Guatemala, came to Massachusetts at age 19. Now a mother of seven in her mid 40s, she has been unable to legally obtain a license for two and a half decades. Often pausing to wipe the tears from her eyes, she emotionally recounted the difficulties she faces in her predicament. She is unable to drive her children to school or to the hospital, unable to cash a check or open a bank account, and unable to visit her mother in Guatemala. Up to this point, so much of our focus had been concerned with the public safety implications of the bill that it was sobering to see a room full of people so greatly affected by the status quo. The day truly helped to put the importance of the bill in perspective.

Update

As of September, the official record noted that the Senate had concurred and the House had referred the bill to the Committee on Transportation.

For more information

Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA)
miracoalition.org