Preventing someone from working, harassing them at work, or threatening them or their job can turn the workplace from a place of self-worth, power and satisfaction to a place of terror and danger. Bill S.918 would allow a victim of domestic abuse, in a company with 50 or more personnel, to take up to 15 nonpaid days to deal with all issues relating to the abuse.

Domestic Violence Bill

■ The Bill

Bill S.918: “An Act to establish employment leave and safety remedies to victims of domestic violence, stalking and sexual assault”

■ Elevator Speech

Safety and security are necessary components to every community. Yet in Massachusetts, domestic violence victims lack not only physical safety, but also economic security. Half of all victims lose their job in the aftermath of abuse. In the House Ways and Means committee, Bill S.918 is fighting to empower victims to gain physical safety while maintaining economic stability. Now is our opportunity to create a safe community for all. Call your representative and urge them to vote S.918 out of committee and through the House before the end of this session. It’s time to set a new standard of job security in our community.

■ Excerpts from Storybook

Listen to the Experts

According to REACH, a domestic violence shelter, victims are exponentially more likely to stay with their abuser when they are financially dependent. Having and keeping their jobs is essential to victim’s safety.

Your Boss Agrees

There is no opposition to the bill. In fact, according to Jon Hurst from Retailers Association of MA, this is an important case for mandated leave. We want “employees happy and healthy.” The negligible cost of losing an employee for a few days is nothing in comparison to the
benefits of employees taking the necessary steps to protect themselves.

**Know the Facts**

Over 20% of women who have experienced domestic violence have been caused to arrive late or miss work.

About 50% of domestic violence victims reported a job loss in part due to domestic violence.

Almost 60% of domestic violence victims are reprimanded at work for abuse related incidents.

**A Labor Issue**

Batterers work to get victims fired and to disrupt the productivity of the workplace. The equivalent of 32,000 full-time jobs are lost due to domestic violence.

**Hear A Story**

“Marsha” worked for many years as a hospital administrator. She was very successful in her career and had a baby on the way. She seemed to have everything. What her work did not know was that every night her husband beat her and threatened her life. In the aftermath of the abuse, she was fired and also lost her baby. She was left unemployed and financially dependent on her abuser.

**Op-ed Piece**

Recent reports indicate that Massachusetts’ unemployment rate is now down to 6.5%, which should make Commonwealth residents feel a little more secure in their jobs. While this is definitely good news for working residents of Massachusetts, the economy regaining strength is not the only important factor when discussing job security and employment. In fact for a certain demographic, the rebounding economy might not change their rates of job loss at all. Domestic violence and sexual assault victims experience job loss at an alarming rate.

Over 50% of victims lose their jobs or are forced to quit in the aftermath of abuse. In addition, over 20% of women who have experienced domestic violence have been caused to arrive late or miss work and almost 60% of domestic violence victims are reprimanded at work for abuse-related incidents. To make matters worse, the rates of domestic abuse are continually increasing so job loss for domestic violence victims is only worsening. Yet right now Massachusetts now has the opportunity to change the situation for far too many victims of domestic violence.

Domestic Violence Bill S.918 provides for up to 15 days of unpaid, guaranteed leave from work, which will allow victims to deal with all necessities related to the abuse. For example, this leave could be used to seek medical care, psychological counseling, or even something immediate such as emergency shelter or child-care services.

This bill will have many invaluable and lasting effects. For one, victims will be able to take the time to get the care and assistance they need. Also, in essence, this bill helps victims to escape abuse. Research shows that victims of abuse are substantially less likely to leave their partner if they are not employed or are financially dependent on their abusive partner. Without the threat of job loss, victims will be more able to take the necessary steps to leave their partner ensuring safety for them and in many situations, their children.

Domestic violence tends to be an issue that is so anonymous it is often forgotten. But to the 1 in 4 women or 1 in 33 men who experience abuse in their lives, it’s essential that we do anything we can to provide job security to many who really need it. Do the small act of calling your representative and ask them to support Bill S.918 and get it out of House Ways and Means.

The facts are clear: victims of domestic violence and sexual assault are losing their jobs at alarming rates due to abuse. The solution? Domestic Violence Bill S.918. What do you need to do? Make sure Bill S.918 passes. Call, email, or even tweet your representative, tell them to make sure Bill S.918 passes through House Ways and Means and onto the House floor. With your help we can substantially change the lives of many in our communities.

**Excerpt from Campaign Journals**

Rebecca

*Phone Planning Meeting with Laura Van Zandt from REACH, Waltham, MA*

This most recent phone meeting with Laura Van Zandt, Executive Director of REACH, was following numerous other phone calls in regards to our partnership in the creation of the “community meeting.” Laura and I speak every week for approximately 20 minutes about the bill itself, tactics for pushing it forward, and the planning and goals of the community meeting in May. Laura has been really supportive of the idea of raising awareness and momentum for the bill through a community meeting and
interested in being involved from the beginning. Her stance has always been that REACH is doing too many other things to do the footwork of making an event like this happen, but is not only extremely supportive of the event but would like to be involved.

This has actually worked out perfectly for me, because I want the experience of learning to run advocacy events [making these types of contacts, working with Representative Stanley directly, writing a press-release, finding a space, holding a function, etc.]. So this experience has been invaluable for me. In addition, by having REACH backing us, it gives some validity and credibility to the event. During this meeting specifically I told her about the confirmation of the space for the event and we talked about how to write a press release and whom we would send it out to. We also discussed the agenda for the evening and the different speakers we would want to participate.

This meeting was really helpful in nailing down some of the logistics of the meeting as well as answering questions for me about how to write a press release and advertise for the event. Like many of the other times I have gotten off the phone with Laura, I felt reassured in the steps I have taken, clearer about what the next steps are, and excited for the event and the impact it will make. Every time I speak with Laura I am glad that I am able to ask her opinion on every step I take, because given her experience, it is really wonderful to have Laura as a resource.

■ Update

As of August 20, 2012, the bill was not scheduled for a first reading and died in the House Committee on Ways and Means. It can be reintroduced in the future.

For more information

www.janedoe.org