Advocacy for Policy Change

Brandeis students work to reform Massachusetts law

September 2014
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

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melissa Stimell</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Message from Jay Kaufman '68, MA '73</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Required Project Components</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaccompanied Homeless Youth</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dillon Harvey '14 &amp; Si-Si Hensley '14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensive Sex Education</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ally Bernstein '14 &amp; Sophie Miller '15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Violence Bill</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marisa Budlong '15 &amp; Kelly Peterson '14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earned Paid Sick Time</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annie Chen '14 &amp; Marino Pawlowski '14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solitary Confinement</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melanie Gomes '16 &amp; Leah Igdalsky '14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevent Cruelty to Farm Animals</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molly Hillman '14 &amp; Leah Staffin '15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raise the Minimum Wage</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael DeFeo '14 &amp; Harold Salinas '14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicide Prevention</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikki Friedman '14 &amp; Sarah Sue Landau '14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-State Tuition for Undocumented Students</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sela Brown '15 &amp; Sneha Walia '15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congo Conflict Minerals</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colin Markel '14 &amp; Dominic Schwartz '14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hinton State Laboratory</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sisana Farley '15 &amp; Dylan Schlesinger '15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Advocacy for Policy Change: Brandeis students work to reform Massachusetts law
Introduction

Melissa Stimell

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. 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 legislative change.

Now in its fifth 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 2014 we anointed 22 citizen advocates for such issues as homeless youth, workers’ rights, prison reform, and the environment.

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 their 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 6.) 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 five 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, Melissa Ross, Cynthia Tschampl, and this year’s assistants Roz Kabrhel and Doug Smith.

This course is part of the Advocacy for Policy Change initiative, designed to encourage citizens to bring moral and ethical insights to the legislative process. This initiative is 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 Weissberg.
Schneider, to whom the students and I are very grateful. For more about this initiative, see brandeis.edu/ethics/atbrandeis/advocacy.

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 sixth year of “Advocacy for Policy Change” we look forward to its continued growth, and to supporting the next cohort of inspirational citizen advocates.

Melissa Stimell
Professor of the Practice in Legal Studies
Director of Internships, Legal Studies Program
Internship Coordinator, Social Justice and Social Policy 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 five years to help establish and nurture this valuable course, which continues the Brandeis tradition of active engagement with the pressing issues of the time.

Representative Kaufman hosting the students of “Advocacy for Policy Change” at the Massachusetts State House, February 11, 2014.
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 2014. The assignments were designed to develop and demonstrate the students' understanding of the issues and the advocacy process.

**Required Project Components**

**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 29th, 2014, students gave brief oral presentations of their legislative advocacy projects and responded to questions from audience members.
In 2009, there were nearly 6,000 homeless high school students alone in Massachusetts who were categorized as unaccompanied. Such youth are unaccompanied because they are “acting day-to-day without guidance of a parent or guardian.” These youth are at a high risk for a wide variety of health and safety concerns including malnutrition, depression, exposure to violence, exposure to sexually transmitted diseases, and even death. House Bill 135: An Act providing housing and support services for unaccompanied homeless youth, seeks to address this issue by funding a range of housing options including emergency shelter, temporary placements, “kinship” placements, and transitions to independent living. Additionally, funds would support medical and mental health services, case management, educational and employment assistance, and other social support services. Up to five million dollars will be allotted to solve these problems in the hope that investing in this act will give thousands of youth better opportunities and the skills they need to contribute to a better future for their own lives and the state of Massachusetts.

### The Bill

H.135: An act providing housing and support services to unaccompanied homeless youth

### Elevator Speech

Our names our Dillon Harvey and Si-Si Hensley. We are students at Brandeis University passionate about solving Massachusetts’s homeless youth rising trend. By engaging and empowering these youth we can prevent perpetual dependence on government intervention and create healthier and safer communities. We were very alarmed when we discovered there are currently 6000 unaccompanied homeless youth documented thus far, with many youth invisible to survey and falling through the cracks. H.135 seeks to reduce youth homelessness and its adverse effects by funding organizations and agencies that provide housing, counseling, educational services, and more.
This measure is necessary to prevent youth from engaging in harmful activities and breaking the cyclical nature of homelessness. Will the Representative speak with the Ways and Means Chair in support Bill H.135, and line item 4000-0300?

**House Ways and Means Script**

Everyone deserves a safe place to sleep in at night, but many youth in this state lack the stable home necessary for success. Here in our home state of Massachusetts, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education estimated that there were 5,853 public high school students struggling with homelessness without any support from a loving guardian or parent. Moreover, this is only a small fraction of the amount of unaccompanied youth in our state. Many have yet to be surveyed and those we do know about often suffer from significant physical, mental and emotional issues. These serious problems only compound their small chances to break the cycle of homelessness. Based on this, we believe that House Bill 135, An Act relative to unaccompanied homeless youth, is the necessary step to take to help this vulnerable constituency.

An act providing housing and support services to unaccompanied homeless youth seeks to acquire funding to be allocated for agencies and organizations to provide services such as emergency shelter, short term and transitional housing, counseling, access to health care, education and employment services, case management, advocacy and referral services. These funds will also go towards outreach and surveying efforts so that we can gain greater insights into the extent of homeless youth in our Massachusetts community in order to develop real, tangible solutions. We hope that you will view this bill as a small investment that will go a very long way in ensuring that our youth find happy, healthy and uplifting homes.

Keeping kids off of the streets is something we all benefit from. Decreasing the temptation and opportunities to engage in criminal activity is a foreseeable benefit of developing sustainable housing intervention for currently homeless youth. We will also recapture citizens to help contribute to our economy. Folks with stable homes are more likely to retain employment, thus giving them the funds to spend earned by their own hard work. It is always better for society when individuals can use their own money rather than relying on finite government assistance and resources. House Bill 135 is a key step in supporting homeless youth towards the direction of financial independence and overall success.

We understand and acknowledge that this is an issue advocating for funds at the same time as many other compelling initiatives, such as the Department of Children and Families corrections and the Minimum Wage bill. However, we believe the amount of services that will be delivered by this bill will bring a significant return on investment. Reintegrating these youth into society will turn them into contributing members of our community, fostering cultural and economic value throughout the Commonwealth.

Everyone deserves a safe place to lay their head at night, especially youth who have not even begun to truly live their lives independently. Thus we ask that you please give support to House Bill 135 and help these youth break the cycle of homelessness before it’s too late.

**Excerpts from Campaign Journals**

**Dillon**

Our first visit was on February 11, 2014. There my partner Si-Si and I met with the legislative aide working on unaccompanied homeless youth advocacy: Khadeejah Ahmad. It was awesome to talk with Khadeejah because you could tell that she cared about the issue and felt a personal connection to it. She and I discussed homeless youth and I expressed how it was an issue I had previously researched in the context of New York City. During the conversation Khadeejah also provided Si-Si and me with concise fact sheets prepared by the Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless. They describe the history of House Bill 135, the need for action and what the bill seeks to do exactly.

This information served as the backbone of the advocacy materials we prepared throughout the semester and it also gave us the contact information of Kelly Turley, Director of Legislative Advocacy at the Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless. Si-Si and I had a brief phone interview on February 14, 2014 with Kelly where we picked her brain on the issue and for some tips about advocating on behalf of the bill. Kelly informed us that writing and visiting legislators is useful and to make sure that we share the personal narratives of affected youth in addition to the research acquired thus far. We also learned that the bill did not have any direct opposition, but rather that the political will had to be generated so that it was not left sitting in a committee on the grounds that not enough constituents talked about it. The conversation with Kelly made me feel energized and capable of being a useful advocate on behalf of unaccompanied homeless youth, and also that I had a new ally to turn to going forward.
"There’s no place like home.” It’s something we’ve been saying since Judy Garland as Dorothy from the movie The Wizard of Oz, and it’s a thought many of us take for granted everyday. At the State House on March 6th, everyone was forced to consider the thought once again, if not for the first time. The film itself was prepared by Innovative Perspectives Collaborative and was a fairly comprehensive look at what it is like living on the streets of Massachusetts. With many accounts of youth, it was very much a real depiction of youth homelessness and the problems associated with it. The film also featured the organization Youth on Fire, centered in Cambridge, Massachusetts, who have done a great deal to reach this population and provide support services and a crutch to stand on in time of need. From the film it was very apparent that Youth on Fire was really able to give these youth exactly what they needed – a place to live, a chance to get back on their feet, and general support. Another interesting aspect of this film and Youth on Fire was the special attention to the LGBTQ issue and its association with youth homelessness.

Along with the video there were a handful of individuals who spoke on this issue. Representative Jim O’Day spoke to how and why he created this bill. However, I believe the most effective speakers were Kelly Turley and the affected youth. She really made the issue relatable and local to Massachusetts. Since she has been working on the bill since its conception, and is part of the special commission that was set up by the predecessor to the bill, she was able to speak to the value of have documentation and data representing this youth population. I think the problem with youth homelessness is that it is an easy problem to overlook and that it is not always very apparent. This event, however, really made it a visible issue and I think was very effective in persuading the public that it is a serious and important issue.

**Update**

As of September 12, 2014, H.135 was still in the House Ways and Means Committee.

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**For more information**

**Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless**

[www.mahomeless.org/](http://www.mahomeless.org/)
An Act relative to healthy youth provides schools with the choice to enhance their sex education curricula with medically accurate and realistic materials. This bill gives students, parents, and school districts a choice to support teenage health through scientifically proven, age-appropriate sex education. Other states such as Maine, Colorado and California have adopted these curricula and have seen a sharp drop in teenage sexual activity as well as an increase in safer sex and healthier relationship behaviors.

The Bill
S.209/H.3793: An Act relative to healthy youth

Excerpt from Storybook
What does the bill do?
Bill S.209 provides guidelines to teach a medically accurate, age-appropriate, comprehensive sexual education, covering abstinence, birth control methods, healthy decision-making, and healthy relationships free of violence and coercion.

Why do we need it?
“I look back and think about how much difference would have been made if my school had done the simplest things early on, like talk about sex… I believe the foundation starts at a young age.” – Student Advocate for Sex Ed Matters

Elevator Speech
Hi, my name is Sophie Miller and this is Ally Bernstein. We find the issue of teen sexual health and healthy respectful relationships extremely important. Massachusetts needs to educate its teens so that they are able to make safe decisions. Supporting a healthy youth and comprehensive education provides teens with information to help them make responsible choices regarding both their relationships and personal health. Under the bill provisions schools would be required to teach both abstinence and contraception, as well as

Comprehensive Sex Education

Comprehensive, medically accurate, age-appropriate sex education for Massachusetts teens

Ally Bernstein ’14
Sophie Miller ’15

Sophie Miller ’15 and Ally Bernstein ’14
information on condoms and safe sex. Students are to be educated on what a healthy respectful relationship consists of, specifically one that is free of coercion and violence. For example in New Hampshire, students are educated with a comprehensive sexual education program, and statistics show that New Hampshire has the lowest rate of teen pregnancies. Students educated with a comprehensive health curriculum are therefore more informed and better capable of successful achievements.

An Act relative to healthy youth, bill S.209/H.3793, would only require that schools already teaching a health curriculum teach a comprehensive, medically-accurate, and age-appropriate one, which is proven to be most effective in helping youth.

This bill is sponsored by Representative James O’Day, and was originally sponsored in the Senate by Katherine Clark. This bill is currently in the House Committee on Ways and Means. However, there are minimal fiscal implications and parents can opt their child out of the curriculum if they choose. We would like your help by contacting them to show your support of An Act relative to healthy youth. Do you have any questions or reservations regarding this bill? We would like to address any questions or concerns you may have.

**Letter to the Legislator**

The topics of health and education are ones we find extremely relevant and important to our community. Massachusetts needs to educate its teens to inform them on sexual health and positive dating behaviors so that they are able to make safe, responsible and healthy decisions regarding their own behaviors. We support a comprehensive sexual education, which provides teens with health information that will allow them to make safe and informed choices in regards to their own sexual health as well as their relationships. Many teens have expressed wishing to have been better educated in school so that they could have made more informed decisions regarding both their health and relationships.

An Act relative to healthy youth, bill S.209/H.3793 is sponsored by Representative James O’Day, as well as the Joint Committee on Education. It was formerly sponsored by now U.S. Congresswoman Katherine Clark. This bill requires only that schools who are currently teaching a sexual education curriculum teach a medically-accurate, age-appropriate, comprehensive one, which has been proven to be most effective in helping youth. While currently many schools are already teaching a curriculum, it is not always a medically-accurate one, and the lack in information does not help teens make positive choices.

A comprehensive sexual education curriculum not only teaches contraceptive methods to prevent teenage pregnancy and the contraction of STIs, which are both large problems affecting our youth, but it also teaches teens on how to live a healthy lifestyle as well as factors that contribute to having healthy and positive relationships. According to the CDC, young people contract almost half of the nation’s 19 million new STIs each year; additionally 1 in 10 students has experienced dating violence. These numbers are very high and could both be lowered through a comprehensive health education curriculum, which has been proven to be effective in numerous other states. Parents of a local teen that was killed due to dating violence have commented wishing their daughter had been better informed about healthy relationships. An Act relative to healthy youth is not a mandate and does not impose any requirements on schools not already teaching a health education curriculum, but rather provides a set of standards for the school districts that have elected a sexual health curriculum.

Currently this bill is stuck in the House Committee on Ways and Means. However this bill has minimal fiscal implications and allows parents the full option of opting their child out of the curriculum if they so choose and therefore should not be considered controversial. Opposition to the bill claims that schools will teach children information on how to obtain abortions without their parents consent - this claim is completely false and while the framework does include curriculum materials regarding abortions it is presented to students of the appropriate age. We would like your support and help by contacting the House Committee on Ways and Means to express your support for this bill regarding health education for youth.

**House Ways and Means Script**

We would like to talk with you today about the issue of teen health. Massachusetts needs to educate its teens so that they are able to make safe decisions. The future health of teens is determined by the risks and decisions they make today. In order for teens to make safe, smart and responsible sexual health decisions they need a comprehensive sexual education curriculum so that they can make informed decisions.

An Act relative to healthy youth, bill S.209/H.3793, would only require that schools already teaching a health curriculum teach a comprehensive, medically-accurate, and age-appropriate one, which is proven to be most effective in helping youth.
In addition to sexual health education, Massachusetts teens need information on respectful, coercion and violence free relationships. 1 in 10 students experience dating violence. In Wayland, 18 year old Lauren Dunne was killed by her ex-boyfriend. Lauren's mom, Mary, wants her daughters story to be a wake up call to other teens that are in abusive or violent relationships. Schools also need to take an active role by informing teens about healthy relationships. Research has shown that schools who have included information on healthy relationships as part of the curriculum have students that are 60% less likely to continue dating violence behaviors against a partner after learning about safe dating.

This bill is sponsored by Representative James O'Day, and was originally sponsored in the Senate by Katherine Clark. As you know, this bill is currently in the House Committee on Ways and Means. Parents can choose to opt their child out of the curriculum, making it a noncontroversial issue for parents and legal guardians that have fundamental disagreements about teaching sexual education to teens.

There are minimal fiscal implications of this bill. The estimated costs of the bill are approximately $50,000 and the benefits of the bill are likely to exceed the costs. An Act relative to healthy youth is considered a revenue neutral bill because it is not a mandate but rather provides guidance and a set of standards to follow when a district chooses to teach sexuality education.

In 2004 Representative Henry Waxman from the U.S. House of Representatives' Committee on Government Reform reported that 80 percent of federally funded abstinence-only education programs present students with distorted information on contraceptives, misinform students of the risks of abortion, blend religious views and scientific perspective, present and perpetuate gender stereotypes as scientific facts rather than social constructs, and contain basic scientific error.

This bill will not only make sure that the information provided to students through education programs is medically-accurate, but will also ensure that the government funded money is used on comprehensive health education programs that have been proven effective with students so that money is no longer wasted on ineffective and inaccurate school curriculum. Since many schools are already teaching a health education and schools who are not will not be required to add one, this bill will require very minimal funding.

Also there are many resources that are available for schools that find they need to improve their sexual education curricula. The Department helps make the transition to comprehensive sexual education quick and cost-effective through an approved list of online programs and by offering free training and guidance to schools.

This bill is not a mandate and should not be viewed as controversial because of the following: the bill does not require schools to provide sexual education but rather provides those schools that do choose to teach a sexual health curriculum with a set of standards. An Act relative to healthy youth does not interfere with local control, each school district as well as parents and legal guardians remain autonomous in their decisions about teaching a comprehensive sex education curriculum and their individual child's participation. Additionally, the comprehensive sex ed framework does not remove abstinence from the curriculum but rather informs students about both contraception and abstinence.

In the long run, An Act relative to healthy youth has the potential of saving the state money by preventing teen pregnancies in which the state would have to support the child in addition to saving money on treatments for STIs.

This bill has positive fiscal implications since the comprehensive programs are not costing any additional money and these preventative programs in turn can actually save the state money in the long run. “Since 1997 the federal government has invested more than $1.5 billion dollars in abstinence-only programs – proven ineffective programs which censor or exclude important information that could help young people protect their health.”

Therefore An Act relative to healthy youth would be the best option not only for revising the school curriculum but also fiscally for the state as it is both most effective as well as costs less. For these reasons we would like the bill to be voted out of the House of Ways and Means so that it can return to the House of Representatives for a third reading during this session.

Excerpts from Campaign Journals

Ally

Sophie and I went to the Planned Parenthood in Boston to interview Tricia Wajda and Alicia Johnson. Tricia’s position at Planned Parenthood is the Director of Public Affairs while Alicia is the Media Relations Coordinator. In a conference room at the Planned Parenthood office Sophie and I sat down with Tricia and Alicia to discuss the bill, H.3793, An Act relative to healthy youth. The purpose of this meeting was to record video footage for our video. Alicia requested not to be on camera, so we focused most of our questions towards Tricia. Tricia supports the bill on the fundamental level but also as a mother of two boys. She provided us with personal stories about some
of the questions her sons were beginning to ask about reproduction and where babies come from. Her boys are still young, ages 7 and 4, and extremely curious. She found herself at a loss for words when presented with such questions and stressed the importance of schools educating both students and parents on the best way to handle the topic of sex.

**Sophie**

One problem my partner and I have encountered though when working on our bill is the opposition's viewpoint on our bill. While we believe this bill to be common sense and something that should be passed to ensure medically accurate information is taught in schools that are choosing to teach a sexual education curriculum, many on the opposition are misinformed about what the repercussions of the bill are. They believe the bill will teach teens how to have sex, or how to get an abortion, something many are strongly against and that the bill does not do. Educating these people on what the bill actually does so that they can better understand and no longer oppose the bill has been an issue for us.

Our biggest struggle though when trying to get this bill passed is in talking with the legislators who have been voting against the bill, not because they disagree with it, but because they know their constituents do and would be very angered by them voting for it. Once we have educated these legislators on exactly what the bill does and does not do, they usually agree with it. However it is harder to educate the broader population and therefore harder or near impossible for us to get the legislators to vote against what their constituents want.

**Update**

As of September 12, 2014, H.3793 was in the House Ways and Means Committee.

For more information

Planned Parenthood Massachusetts
http://www.plannedparenthood.org/planned-parenthood-massachusetts
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.1892/H.1764 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.

**The Bill**

H.1764: An Act to establish employment leave and safety remedies to victims of domestic violence, stalking and sexual assault

**Storybook Excerpt**

August 15, 2013: Jennifer Martell, 27, of Waltham, was stabbed to death allegedly by Jared Remy, 34, her boyfriend and father of their 4-year old daughter.

Two nights before the murder, Martell had escaped to a neighbor’s house and called the police to report that Remy had grabbed her by the neck and smashed her head into a mirror. Remy was arrested and released on personal recognizance, issued a “no abuse” order, and ordered to return for a hearing in the morning. At the hearing on Wednesday morning, prosecutors did not seek bail or a stay away or no contact order. When Martell returned to their home to collect some belongings, Remy attacked Martell with a knife. Two neighbors attempted to pull Remy off of Martell while he was strangling and attacking her.

Maureen Gallagher, Policy Director of Jane Doe, Inc.: The Massachusetts Coalition Against Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence, supports H.1764. “If they lose their job because they have missed work, that sets them back. They may return to an unsafe situation. This [bill] is a key economic empowerment tool.”

John Hurst, president of the Retailers’ Association of Massachusetts, supports H.1764 and said in his testimony: “Of all the various leave bills out there, whether it be maternity, family leave, paid sick leave, this certainly would be one we aren’t opposing.”
Elevator Speech
Hi Representative. Our names are Kelly Peterson and Marisa Budlong. As residents of Waltham and students at Brandeis University, we’d like to talk to you today about an issue we are concerned about and one that is of pivotal importance to the Commonwealth today – domestic violence. With 1 in 4 Massachusetts women experiencing domestic violence in the Commonwealth, it poses a serious threat to the safety of Massachusetts’s residents and families. This past summer, Jennifer Martell was murdered in our own backyard. We have both lived off-campus in Waltham, and feel a strong connection to this community. These are the people we see and talk to everyday – these are our neighbors. It was heart wrenching to find out that something like this happened period – let alone happen down the street. Unfortunately, Martell’s incident is not isolated. There were 14 other deaths in the Commonwealth resulting from domestic violence disputes. Incidents like this like are more likely to occur when victims are economically isolated – which is often the case. Abusers cut off all means of protection, and even passionate neighbors – like the neighbors who tried to pull off Jared Remy from Martell – cannot prevent domestic violence from happening. It is Massachusetts representatives like you who can. H.1764 allows victims up to 15 days of employment leave to take care of needs fundamental for economic independence from their abusers. Business associations even support this bill since they know that protected and healthy workers are better employees. We’re asking you to support this bill because victims deserve the chance to get back on their feet. Do you have any reservations about the bill, and how can we address those?

Letter to the Legislator
We are advocates for H.1764, which would allow victims of domestic violence to have the option of 15 days of employment leave. This issue is especially important to us because this past summer a Waltham resident was murdered in a domestic dispute. Waltham is our community, and as both of us have lived off campus in the city we feel very connected to its residents. Sadly, this is not an isolated incident. There were 14 other victims that died due to a domestic dispute this past year in Massachusetts. In addition, 1 in 4 women in Massachusetts will experience domestic violence in their lifetime. Massachusetts’s residents deserve the right to resources to seek help, find safe situations, and get back on their feet.

According to Safe Horizon, women brought to emergency rooms due to domestic violence are usually more socially isolated and have fewer financial resources. This financial uncertainty can cause victims to stay with their abusers solely for economic reasons – often without the option of turning to anyone for help and without knowing the resources available. If victims are forced to choose between their jobs and finding services for their health and well being, they will often forgo their basic needs in order to continue working. Senator Cynthia Creem has stated that between 25% and 50% of violence victims have lost a job because of absences stemming from their abuse. These victims are often too afraid and embarrassed to tell their employers the reason they missed work.

H.1764 allows victims up to 15 days of employment leave in order to seek counseling, medical attention, or legal assistance; find secure housing; appear in court; obtain a protective order; attend a meeting with a district attorney or law enforcement official; or attend child custody hearings. These needs are fundamental to ensure a victim’s economic independence from abusers. H.1764 would allow for victims to utilize a vital economic tool that ensures job security while they take care of their needs.

Any concerns regarding the economic impact of this bill are unwarranted. Business associations support this bill because they value their employees’ safety, and know the bill will not be a burden. H.1764 protects businesses’ profits by allowing the company to choose if the leave is paid or unpaid. Small businesses are also protected, as this bill does not apply to businesses with less than 50 employees.

We are writing this letter in the hope that you will support H.1764. The safety and well being of your Massachusetts residents depend on it.

House Ways and Means Script
We are advocating for An Act to establish employment leave and safety remedies to victims of domestic violence, stalking and sexual assault, H.1764, because we want to do what we can to improve the safety Massachusetts communities, including our own. Once in an abusive relationship, it is extremely hard for victims of domestic violence to survive economically independent from abusers. With 1 in 4 Massachusetts women experiencing domestic violence, this is by no means a small problem. This is an issue that affects everyone – schools, businesses, mothers, children, police officers – whole communities are
terrorized by domestic violence and it is time that we did something to stop it.

H.1764 allows 15 days of employment leave from work in order to seek counseling, medical attention, or legal assistance; find secure housing; appear in court; obtain a protective order; attend a meeting with a district attorney or law enforcement official; or attend child custody hearings. This leave is paid or unpaid at the discretion of the employer. For this reason, it does not pose any threat to businesses. In fact, Associated Industries of Massachusetts (AIM) and the Retailers’ Association of Massachusetts (RAM) support this bill – RAM calling the bill ‘reasonable.’

Domestic abuse can infiltrate into any workplace. 74% of employed partner violence victims were harassed by their partner while at work, which caused 56% of them to be late for work at least 5 times a month, 28% to leave early at least 5 days a month, and 54% to miss at least 3 full days of work a month. These victims are often afraid and embarrassed to tell their employers why they missed work.

The cycle of domestic violence is a cycle of increasing extremities. Each time an incident occurs, it is likely that the next incident will be worse. Victims often cannot escape because they are dependent on their abusers. This dependence allows abusers to trap their victims in an inescapable situation, and the importance of job security for victims becomes vital for survival. Economic independence allows victims the possibility and means of escape.

Not only does domestic violence cause chaos within households and communities, it is also a financial burden. Domestic abuse costs the United States $8.3 billion in expenses annually – a figure that includes a loss of $2.5 billion in worker productivity. There is a possibility of money being saved from this bill, since workers who would not be in the workforce or would be poor workers would have the opportunity to put a higher focus onto their work.

There is not an opposition to this bill because there is no downside to it. In order for this bill to pass, it needs to get out of committee. While there is not an opposition to this bill, there is apathy towards issues of domestic violence. This violence doesn’t have to happen, we let it happen.

We want you to support victims and advocate for this bill as it goes through the House Ways and Means.

Excerpts from Campaign Journals

Marisa

I was contacted by Suffolk University to come talk with their students about becoming a student sexual violence prevention activist. Along with lobbying for a domestic violence bill this semester, I have also been involved with the newly formed Brandeis Students Against Sexual Violence (B.SASV), who recently sent their demands to the administration. Because of my increasing interest in work involving gender-based violence, I have reached out to many professors about doing a senior thesis on the climate of sexual violence on the Brandeis campus. This is how I ended up being contacted.

At the panel, I discussed the methods B.SASV has used in order to gain awareness of this issue – as well as start the process of making room in our budget for basic safety measures for survivors of sexual violence (which is often gender-based). I also discussed lobbying for the domestic violence bill, and how I had to frame the understanding of domestic violence to representatives and their aids, which is quite different from an academic discussions on gender-based violence or even the rhetoric used by campus sexual violence prevention activists.

Kelly

[Marisa and I attended a press conference about domestic violence organized by Speaker DeLeo.] DeLeo’s Press conference was a great event to go to because I was able to see things that normal people like me are usually not able to see. After reading about the press conference on the State House News Service, Marisa and I thought that it was a big event that was open to the public. When we got to the event, which was in the House Member’s Lounge (not on any map of the State House- and from what we can tell is usually only open to House members), after walking through two doors with security guards (who let us in when we asked), we realized it was only for press, legislators and a few legislative aides. However, we were already there, so we sat down and tried to act like we were supposed to be there.

The event was amazing, because it was exactly related to what we have been working on all semester. We were able to hear DeLeo and Martha Coakley, the Attorney General, speak about the failures of the justice system in the case of Jared Remy, and how they hoped to fix these failures with a new domestic violence bill. We were also able to hear the press question both Coakley and DeLeo about who was to blame for the death of Jennifer Martel. Both individuals blamed the judicial system of the time,
and didn’t blame specific organizations or people. The two gave an overview of what the bill would entail, which unfortunately did not include our domestic violence leave legislation.

We didn’t make any connections at this meeting, because we were a little worried that if we talked to anyone, and they realized who we were, they would have realized that we weren’t supposed to be there. However, we did learn a lot about how a press conference works, what it looks like when press asks questions, and see the biggest players in this issue talk about why it was important to them.

**Update**

H.1764 was incorporated into S.1892, a larger domestic violence bill. S.1892 passed and was signed into law by the governor on August 8, 2014.

**For more information**

Jane Doe, Inc.
www.janedoe.org

REACH Beyond Domestic Violence
www.reachma.org
An Act establishing earned paid sick time seeks to protect the rights of hard workers in Massachusetts to seek medical care and take care of their sick loved ones during times of illness. The bill systemizes ‘earned paid sick time’ and ‘earned unpaid sick time’ to allow employees to earn one hour of sick time for every 30 hours worked to ensure that employees would not be fired, threatened, and punished for missing work.

The Bill

H.1739: An Act establishing earned paid sick time

Op-Ed

4:00 AM: Wake up in Waltham, with the fluid in my lungs rising as swiftly as I do. Shower, shampoo, and slip on the chef jacket with the last pack of Emergen-C in hand.

4:30 AM: Speed down Western Ave. in Allston. Stop in at 7-Eleven for one last surge of Vitamin-C in the form of orange juice and tissues. Exchange niceties with the clerk while clearing my nose and throat of lingering phlegm.

4:45 AM: Punch in. Set up the bakery, and periodically bathe in Purell and hand soap until shift ends.

12:00 PM: Punch out. Run down the block to Shaw’s and grab another box of Emergen-C before class starts.

This wasn’t my daily routine, but during the last stretch of the cold and flu season from February through April of last year, it became a ritual that verged on cultish. I chose this job because the early mornings fit my busy afternoon schedule, and calling out was simply not an option.

Beyond the utmost understanding façade of the service business, there is always retribution to be had for such actions. My former employer rued any scenario where they might become a “social institution” an umbrella term of which I was reminded regularly.

As a result, I had no problem keeping a personable demeanor as the morning breakfast crowd

Marino Pawlowski ’14 and Annie Chen ’14
drifted in and out, but none of them knew that our sneeze guards may as well have been double sided.

This editorial, however, does not seek to reprimand my employers for anything any malefeasance aside from what is currently being argued at the state level. House Bill No. 1739, An Act establishing earned paid sick time, has been argued among representatives for the past year. At the cut-off last month it was pushed to the end of July for a final verdict. The importance of this legislation is intuitive for any line of work, but particularly for food service, where the public health is put at the greatest risk. Not surprisingly, the largest opponent of the bill is the upper management of restaurant industry, fearful of providing its workers with the coverage that has already been shown to boost productivity and morale of workers in our neighboring Connecticut. Unfortunately, Massachusetts has not yet built immunity to the greed of capital gain. The issue trails behind other equally important rights of a worker, such as a raised minimum wage. We must not forget that earned sick time is also relevant, even if the results are not as immediately gratifying. If this bill gets lost in the fold, then its legislators must begin from nothing again next year, and this momentum will come to a standstill. That's another cold and flu season where each Massachusetts resident who eats out has to question the journey of his or her food from pot to plate.

If you can look back on your last visit to McDonalds, Bertucci’s, or even a high-profile establishment on Newbury Street where your server might have been showing signs of illness, you can see the necessity of this bill. Tell your local representative that the warm temperatures of summer should not cloud their judgment in the feverish winter months. As for businesses, a few honest words on their carefully curated “social institution” within the bubble of Yelp, Urbanspoon, and Facebook will undoubtedly cure their bouts of delirium.

Marino
In the past few months, I have immersed myself into the world of earned sick time legislation with my project partner, wherein we researched the issue with a multilateral approach, utilizing political sources as well as labor organizations. While there is support for the house bill, and many of the representatives gave the impression that their support for this legislation was intuitive, I was unable to find coalitions that focused solely or even specifically on earned sick time. This is understandable, as our visits to the State House were more focused on keeping the issue on the consciousness of the legislators rather than advocating for it.

While it seemed that this bill was cut and dried from a legislative perspective, my conversations and correspondence outside the State House was more sobering. My reflection will look at three issues, the first being an analysis of the Joint Committee on Labor and Workforce Development, as well as my attempt to correspond with RaiseUp Massachusetts and Local 26, a Boston-based hospitality industry union that is present on the Brandeis campus through our dining services workers. In summation, this journal is a reflection on the role of an advocate to aid in bringing groups together, particularly for issues like earned sick time, which are relevant but inevitably trail behind more ambitious workers rights initiatives, like the minimum wage legislation.

... Overall, this campaign journey has taught me the importance of an advocate. After attempting to meet with coalitions and speaking with a workers union, it has become evident that the workings of the State House are well intentioned, but very isolated from the typical Commonwealth resident, even those who it would benefit. If given the opportunity to start from the beginning, I would have tried to work more with the coalition and union to spark more interest in the issue. With more support, this bill can be voted out of Ways and Means.

Excerpts from Campaign Journals

Annie
It seems like obvious policy, that if a child is sick, they should be kept from school to recover. Temporarily removing them from the classroom safeguards the health of other children...Knowing this, Massachusetts's legislators continue to delay passing policy that would allow hardworking parents to earn time off to care for their children's health...Every person who has a kid or knows a kid [should] contact their Massachusetts representative today about the Earned Paid Sick Time Act...

Update
As of September 12, 2014, H.1739/S.900 was in the Senate Ways and Means Committee. This issue is scheduled to appear on the November 2014 ballot.

For more information

Massachusetts Paid Leave Coalition
www.masspaidleave.org
Solitary Confinement

Reforming the use of solitary confinement in Massachusetts prisons

Melanie Gomes '16
Leah Igdalsky '14

S.1133, An Act relative to appropriate use of solitary confinement, seeks to reform policy regarding the use of solitary confinement in Massachusetts prisons. Currently, Massachusetts is one of only two states in which a prisoner may be held in isolation for up to ten years. Inmates in solitary confinement are not always informed of the conditions or timeline of their stays in segregation. Research suggests that solitary confinement is costly, ineffective, and psychologically damaging to prisoners. Furthermore, segregated prisoners lack rehabilitative opportunities and struggle to readjust to life outside.

■ The Bill
S.1133: An Act relative to the appropriate use of solitary confinement

■ Storybook Excerpt

Robert (Bobby) Dellelo spent five years and one month in solitary in the Departmental Disciplinary Unit (DDU) at Walpole Prison. Recalling his time in segregation, Bobby explained his experience there: “I have never killed a person in my life, and here I was thinking about killing someone with my bare hands,” Bobby explains. “I didn’t recognize who I was.” He suffered extreme mental health repercussions from his time in segregation. Bobby explains that when he speaks publicly about his experience, “that rage is still inside of me and it seeps up. I really have to suppress it.” Bobby’s experience in DDU and readjusting to life outside shows the great need for reform. As Bobby says, “the culture in there has to be changed.”

Leslie Walker, Executive Director of Prisoner’s Legal Services, has discovered that even prisoners who “do very well [in segregation] start having psychiatric problems.” Stuart Grassian, an expert psychiatrist on the effects of isolation, explains that individuals “deprived of a sufficient level of environmental and social stimulation will…withdraw progressively into themselves and their own mental fog.” Walker and Grassian agree that the mental health consequences of prolonged confinement are so severe that reform needs to happen now.
• **Elevator Speech**

Keeping our communities safe is important to all of us. Unfortunately, Massachusetts is endangering our towns and cities by failing to prepare prisoners to return to society. Massachusetts is one of only two states in the nation in which a prisoner can be held in solitary confinement for up to ten years. By keeping prisoners in prolonged segregation, we are exacerbating negative mental and behavioral health outcomes, which leads to increased problems upon return to the community. Other states, including Maine and Mississippi, have stopped using prolonged solitary because it is expensive, ineffective and inhumane.

Holding an inmate in prolonged solitary confinement costs the Commonwealth 2-3x the cost of an inmate in the general population. Despite the economic investment, solitary confinement actually yields more negative results. Inmates suffer severe mental health problems, even if they did not have symptoms of mental illness previously. S.1133, *An Act relative to the appropriate use of solitary confinement*, does not aim to eliminate the use of solitary confinement altogether, but rather to reform its use to increase its effectiveness.

S.1133 aims to reform the current system by providing a hearing outlining the conditions of the isolation as well as the conditions for release for inmates held in solitary confinement. The bill requires regular and appropriate medical and psychiatric evaluations and treatment for segregated inmates, and requires that prisoners return to the general prison population upon meeting their outlined conditions for release.

The goal of our corrections system is to rehabilitate prisoners and prepare them to return to the community. If we continue this inhumane practice, we will be failing in our mission and failing our communities. The power is in your hands to correct this long overdue injustice.

We ask you to support S.1133, which has been referred to the Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security. By voting favorably on this bill, you will be moving Massachusetts forward with a more effective, cost-efficient and humane corrections system.

• **Letter to the Legislator**

We are Melanie Gomes and Leah Igdalsky, and we are students at Brandeis University. We are writing to ask for your support for bill S.1133, *An Act relative to the appropriate use of solitary confinement*. This legislation will ensure the safety of Massachusetts’ communities and help our state catch up to the rest of the nation as currently, our state is one of only two that allows inmates to be held in solitary confinement for a period of up to ten years.

Psychological research has shown that prolonged solitary exacerbates mental health problems and cause psychiatric issues in people whom have never experienced symptoms before segregation. Solitary is not only an inhumane method of our corrections system, but it is also very costly. It costs about 2-3 times as much to hold an inmate in isolation than the cost of a prisoner in the general population.

Massachusetts is wasting money on a practice that is ineffective and is endangering our communities. Since many prisoners experience extreme mental health problems while in solitary, they are not prepared to return to society, increasing recidivism rates. Once released, prisoners held in solitary often are more damaged than when they entered prison because they do not have the skills to thrive both socially and professionally.

Although opponents claim this bill will decrease the safety of guards and other prisoners by allowing “dangerous” inmates to remain in the general prison population, other states, including Maine and Mississippi, have enacted similar legislation and have experienced no increase in violence. In fact, Mississippi even saw a decrease in prison violence.

S.1133 provides the regulations our corrections system requires to help Massachusetts move forward. This bill mandates that prisoners be given a written notice of the reason for their placement in solitary and the conditions they must meet to return to the general prison population. Rather than attempt to stop the practice of solitary confinement altogether, the bill seeks to reduce the period of time an inmate can be held in solitary. S.1133 would reform and improve the way segregated inmates are treated by stating that they must receive regular and appropriate psychiatric and medical evaluations and treatment. This will provide prisoners with the resources they need to succeed once they are released.

S.1133 is currently in the Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security. We ask that you vote favorably on this bill and help Massachusetts catch up with the rest of the country and keep our communities safe.

• **House Ways and Means Script**

Keeping our communities safe is important to all of us. Although our prison system is critical to ensuring public safety, the majority of prisoners will return to public life after serving their sentence. Therefore, it is imperative that we consider the mental health and stability of inmates upon their release. Unfortunately, Massachusetts is endangering our towns and cities by failing to prepare prisoners to return to society. Massachusetts is one of only
two states in the nation in which a prisoner can be held in solitary confinement for up to ten years. Research has shown that by keeping prisoners in prolonged segregation, we are exacerbating negative mental and behavioral health outcomes, leading to increased problems upon return to the community. Other states, including Maine and Mississippi, have stopped using prolonged solitary because it is expensive, ineffective, and inhumane.

S.1133, An Act relative to the appropriate use of solitary confinement, requires the Department of Correction to provide inmates in isolation with a hearing every 90 days to update them on the conditions of their segregation, as well as what they must do to be released. Through this hearing system, it would no longer be acceptable to put a prisoner in solitary and simply let him or her languish there, with no clear understanding of how to be released back into the general prison population. Furthermore, prisoners would return to the general prison population upon meeting the agreed-upon conditions for release, incentivizing positive behavior in solitary. The bill requires regular and appropriate medical and psychiatric evaluations and treatment for segregated inmates, which will improve the mental well being of prisoners. More stable and mentally healthy prisoners will be better prepared to return to the general prison population, and ultimately to their communities upon release. Think of your community and your children, Chairman Dempsey. Do you realize that there are inmates being released directly from our solitary confinement cells back into society? The rage, paranoia, and frustration of inmates isolated for years are well documented and these negative mental health outcomes continue long after release. Don’t you want to actually rehabilitate these inmates to prepare them to come out as more productive citizens? Right now, we are failing to do this.

While there are no state prisons in Haverhill, Chairman Dempsey, you can understand both the human and financial cost of maintaining the status quo when it comes to solitary confinement policy. Solitary confinement is the most costly form of incarceration. According to a 2013 study, in our state, guarding a prisoner costs about $45,000 per year, but this number doubles or triples for someone in solitary confinement. Reforming our policy would save the Commonwealth money. States that have reduced their reliance on solitary confinement have reaped the financial rewards. Data from across the country supports the idea that solitary confinement is extremely costly to the taxpayer. Furthermore, it fails to reduce prison violence and increases rates of recidivism. The state of Mississippi closed its supermax state prison and has reduced its use of solitary confinement from 1,000 inmates to about 150. These reforms saved taxpayers in the state $8 million per year. California provides another example of the high cost of solitary. In California, inmates in solitary confinement cost $70,641 per year, while the general prison population costs $58,234. Multiplying this by the 1,100 inmates held in segregation, California is spending an extra $13,647,700 per year to keep these inmates in what is ultimately an inhumane and ineffective system of incarceration.

While limiting unnecessarily long stays in solitary confinement will save the Commonwealth money, we recognize that there are concerns about potential new costs introduced by the bill. Substantial money is to be saved by limiting the number of inmates left in solitary for years, requiring high staffing rates. However, providing hearings for inmates and evaluating and treating their health is not free. The Department of Mental Health will now be required to give prisoners in isolation periodic medical and psychiatric examinations, and the necessary treatment indicated by these examinations. While some critics may not be pleased in spending this money, it is shocking that regular psychiatric evaluations are not already provided to inmates in segregation. The stated mission of our Department of Correction is to rehabilitate prisoners and prepare them to return to their communities as productive members. If we ignore the mental health needs of prisoners in solitary confinement, we are missing a major step to accomplish this goal.

The issue of cost is particularly relevant to S.1133, because it reforms the policy of keeping inmates in solitary confinement for prolonged periods of time. We do not aim to abolish the policy of solitary confinement completely and recognize that it is something that the Department of Correction wants to maintain to ensure security within our prisons. However, we do object to its use for prolonged periods of time. In this time of budget cuts, it is simply not financially feasible to continue the inappropriate conditions of solitary confinement.

You have the power to make this bill move, Mr. Chairman. Financially, this is a good move for the Commonwealth. Maine and Mississippi saved substantial money by reforming their solitary system. We simply cannot afford to keep prisoners in solitary confinement for up to ten years. We are spending far too much on a practice that is clearly failing to rehabilitate inmates. We ask that you reach out to Chairmen Timilty and Naughton on the Committee of Public Safety and Homeland Security and urge them to act favorably on this bill.
Excerpts from Campaign Journals

Melanie

We were worried that we would not be able to personal connect with someone who had been affected by solitary confinement and was willing to talk about it, but we were wrong…. I was truly shown the power of networking and connections when Ms. [Leslie] Walker, [Executive Director of Prisoners Legal Services], gave us the contact information for Robert “Bobby” Dellelo I called Mr. Dellelo one afternoon and ended up speaking with him for an hour and a half… My phone call with Bobby is what made me truly passionate about our bill and what we were fighting for. Talking to someone who had experienced the traumas of prison and solitary confinement really opened up my eyes to an issue most people push aside or don’t even realize exists.

I know phone interviews tend to be less personal and informative, but that was not the case with Bobby. He truly took the time to tell me his story and answer all of my questions without judgment. I think he was so open because he wanted to spread awareness, and he appreciated my interest in this issue that is so important to him. Because of this, I think I was very lucky. Through this project, I realized that luck and timing are key factors in the success of policy and advocacy. Bobby’s personal story drove much of our work and always provided us with inspiration and the personal aspect we needed to make our work unique and “sympathetic.”

Also, speaking to Bobby taught me not to judge a person based upon their past actions. Bobby was very kind and helpful, and he taught me that people just need a push in the “right” direction and encouragement to succeed. I genuinely believe reforming the use of solitary confinement in Massachusetts could change the lives of hundreds of citizens and give them the opportunities they need to turn their lives around... At first, I thought it was a negative thing that I was becoming personally invested in this project and bill, but then I realized that passion is necessary to push any bill forward. Without understanding the problem and how the bill would provide a solution, you don’t have the skills and passion needed to convince others that passing the bill is imperative.

Leah

The first thing that Melanie and I did to begin understanding the complex problem of solitary confinement reform in Massachusetts was a phone call with Leslie Walker, Executive Director of Prisoners’ Legal Services. This conversation served as my introduction to the concept of solitary confinement, excluding what I had seen in television shows like “Orange Is The New Black.” I had read our bill and a few op-eds and articles from The Boston Globe, but I still really could not visualize what it really meant to be held in segregation. Leslie explained what she has observed in her years about what life is like for inmates kept in solitary for prolonged periods, and the negative impact it has on their mental health and well-being.

I will admit that before this meeting, I held many pejorative attitudes towards prisoners in solitary. I assumed, like many others, that these prisoners were “the worst of the worst,” and that they deserved to be kept away from society. Leslie opened my eyes to the fact that many people are placed in solitary for non-violent offenses. She also directed us to studies by experts like Dr. Stuart Grassian on the psychological trauma of solitary and its lasting effects.

Update

As of September 12, 2014, S.1133 had been sent to study.

For more information

Prisoners’ Legal Services
http://www.plsma.org/
Prevent Cruelty to Farm Animals

This bill lays out standards for the ethical treatment of farm animals. H.1456 would impose a penalty for the confinement of farm animals in a manner that does not allow them to turn around freely, lie down, stand up, and fully extend their limbs.

The Bill

H.1456: An Act to prevent farm animal cruelty

Letter to the Legislator

Mohandas Gandhi once said that the greatness of a nation and its moral process can be judged by the way its animals are treated. If this is the case, the United States is in a sad state of affairs. Gestation crates and battery cages are common practices amongst industrial meat producers. These immensely crowded living spaces have been compared to a human living out their days in a coffin, never getting the chance to move or turn around.

Massachusetts has always been a leader in animal welfare. In fact, the MSPCA has voted the state the second best in terms of animal treatment. However, we are beginning to fall behind. Seven states have already outlawed these affronts to animal well-being, getting positive results.

There has been a clear call for these measures from consumers, as naturally raised and cage-free produce sales have climbed significantly in recent years. Aside from the moral aspect, many consumers believe that it is healthier to consume humanely raised meat. Packed conditions are known to spread disease amongst animals, which increases the need for antibiotics. Some studies have even shown that the stress of these living conditions changes the protein quality in meat.

Our state doesn’t have many farms that use these cruel practices. There is only one that utilizes battery cages, and none are known to use gestation crates. By guaranteeing that these practices don’t occur in the Commonwealth, not only can we help local animals, we help set a moral standard for the rest of the nation to live up to.

The main arguments against this bill are financial, reason being that more space for animals means fewer and therefore less profit, driving prices up. However, this concern can be dismissed for several reasons. Firstly, there...
are few enough farms utilizing these practices in MA that a price increase would be minimal at best. By some estimates, prices would only increase by a few cents if we implemented these measures nationally. Furthermore, in states where similar legislation has been implemented costs have actually been driven down as competition increased. Small family farms that didn’t think they could make it versus the giants of industrial agriculture suddenly were able to compete.

As you can see, this bill would be very little cost for making our state a leader in animal rights, our consumers healthier, and Massachusetts a better place to live overall. Please voice your support for bill H.1456.

Op-Ed

As humans, we are lucky enough to be at the top of the food chain. But, it seems like we abuse it. Humans and animals alike experience life through their bodies, and some manifestation of a soul. Humans are more advanced in countless ways than animals, but they feel many of the same feelings as us. They can feel joy and connection, as well as anger, grief, pain and fear. The way we as humans contribute to and increase the power of these difficult experiences is simply unacceptable.

Do you stomp on an ant just for the fun of it, because your feet are big enough? Do you throw cats off you lap when they want to be pet because your arms are strong enough to do so? No, and no. So why do we utilize industry, business, agriculture, and politics as tools to allow inhumane treatment of farm animals? Some say it does not matter how we treat farm animals, because “we’re gonna eat them anyway.” Well, I will present you with another question: how does the fact that we are going to eat them imply it is acceptable to torture them? Perhaps keeping them in cages overnight is reasonable, but cages they cannot turn around in, or even sit down in, are simply inhumane. This situation is common across the country, and there are even a few examples still in Massachusetts.

Massachusetts has been a leader in humane farming practices, but there are still instances of animal abuse in the state. One farm in Western Massachusetts uses a system called battery cages, which is a large cage that is stuffed full with chickens. This is beyond uncomfortable; it is unhealthy, for the animals, and possibly for human consumers as well. Studies are underway, but do we really need the studies to convince us not abuse animals?

We should not need them. The saddest part is that animals do not need to ever be treated this way. Again: there is no need for this treatment. The cost is estimated to be a few hundred dollars to a small farm at most. If a farm needs to alter their cages for chickens, and nothing for pigs or cows or other animals, or make other changes infrastructure, this cost could be much lower. If the battery cage, one huge cage, were adjusted to have separate, reasonably sized individual cages for the chickens, the cost would be even lower. Money should not be the main focus here – morals should.

Excerpts from Campaign Journals

Molly

The first meeting that I had was with a legislative aide for Representative Jason Lewis, who proposed our bill, an act to prevent animal cruelty. Leah and I were together for this meeting, and it went very well. Laura, the aide, called the bill her “baby”. She had done a lot of work on the bill and was very well informed. Another thing that I really liked about this meeting was that her passion stemmed from beliefs that were very moderate. She wasn’t the stereotype of a crazed left-wing vegan nut. She was just a woman working in the office who understood the true implications of the bill and what it would mean in Mass. Getting that moderate view with a lot of information backing it was a solid start for moving forward.

The only drawback to the visit was that our time was short. However, we learned a little about what the current status of the bill was. She told us that it was in the Judiciary Committee, but being held up moving forward because another bill had been proposed that would create an animal welfare board for the state, which would make ours rather unnecessary. The creators of the board were in private talks, going back and forth about how many people should be on the board and what their roles should be. We couldn’t be involved in those talks, but continuing to fight for our piece of legislation would bring attention to legislators the fact that people in Massachusetts care animal treatment, and this extends not just to pets, but farm animals as well.

Leah

One of the times I went to the State House, Molly and I wanted to interview certain staff or legislators for our video.... We learned a lot about the motions of everyday life in the fast-paced environment that is the State House. I had wanted to visit the Department of Agriculture in particular, which is where we received information about our bill, and the opposition, or perceived opposition.

We learned that our bill was up for another vote, which confirmed what we had heard from the bill writer’s aide:
there might be contention, but we still should push for this bill. There was some confusion at the State House and Department of Agriculture about these bills and their place, which I think is for a few reasons: the communication is fast, but movement and meetings in the State House are faster; and, animal rights are generally not central issues to most legislators, let alone farm animal rights.

Therefore, I learned that sometimes, as an advocate, you might face a lot of confusion about your cause, or lack of knowledge, but that does not mean not to push for meetings, educate others, or give up. It means that there is an area that is not necessarily at the front of most legislators’ minds, so, there is a different kind of work in explaining the bill in an objective, not just subjective, way. Additionally, I learned that sometimes you have to sit and wait, and you may not receive the reception you wanted. That is not the time to get upset, but to move forward; if anything, use the frustration or disappointment to remember the importance of what you are advocating for, and that it takes, (in part), patient and passionate people to make change happen.

■ Update
As of September 12, 2014, H.1456 had been added to S.2232, which is in the Senate Ways and Means Committee.

For more information
Massachusetts Humane Society
www.masshumane.org
The Massachusetts State Senate passed a bill that boosts the minimum wage from $8.00 to $9.00, and an additional dollar each year until 2016, up to $11.00; after that, the rate will increase automatically to keep pace with inflation. It is unclear when the Massachusetts House will take up the legislation. Republican lawmakers oppose minimum wage increase. They contend that such an increase – from $8.00 an hour to $11.00 – would hurt job growth, small businesses, and economic growth. Nonetheless, President Obama and Democrats continued to push for this bill to get passed by the end of July, 2014. A referendum has been issued to increase the minimum wage to $10.50, not $11.00, yet Representative Antonio Cabral continues to push for $11.00.

■ The Bill

*H.1701, An Act to improve the Commonwealth’s economy with a strong minimum wage*

■ Storybook Excerpt

Joseph, a Chelsea resident, is the father of two five-year-old children. Joseph is employed at Boston Common Coffee located in Downtown Boston. Due to his minimum-wage salary, Joseph has struggled to financially support his family during the recession. As a result, he must work two jobs to pay for the necessities. When asked about the potential $11 minimum wage, Joseph responded, “The minimum wage today does not a feed a family of four. This change would help me worry less about my family while at work. Also, I would be motivated to work harder without the distractions of financial problems at home.”

■ Excerpt from Campaign Journals

*Michael*

On March 26th, 2014, Harold and I attended the Raise Up Massachusetts pep rally outside the Massachusetts State House to voice our support of the initiative.
... I quickly learned the value of social integration through the rally. The large masses of supporters, led by Lewis Finfer, continued growing through the event because the rally captured the attention of nearby bystanders, almost inviting them to join. One at a time, citizens spoke at the podium sharing their personal stories with passion demonstrating the need to raise the minimum wage. I specifically remember one woman, discussing her teenage daughter with cancer, leaving a powerful imprint on the crowd because she could not provide for her family due to the current minimum wage. Her message provided motivation to the crowd to ignore the cold conditions to continue voicing our opinions.

Once arriving at the rally, I immediately felt the camaraderie because everyone shared a common interest which allowed many strangers to quickly join forces to form one voice in unison. I experienced a ‘pull’ towards the event even though frigid weather attempted to dismantle the rally. The activists’ response to the adverse weather illustrated their unquestionable conviction to achieve their goal. Suffering through the conditions, hundreds of activists marched through the streets for hours leading chants specifically targeting an increase for tipped workers. Simply raising the minimum wage was not enough; tipped workers had to be accounted for too.

... I experienced a new form of advocating for policy change which was truly special. In the past, I had only met with representatives, senators and aides in a professional setting; however, the opportunity to hear Massachusetts citizens fight for themselves made the largest impact of my journey.

Update

Bill H.1701 passed, and was signed into law by Governor Deval Patrick on June 26, 2014. By January 2017, Massachusetts will have the highest state minimum wage in the country, at $11.00 per hour.

For more information

Raise Up Massachusetts
http://yeson4ma.org/
From parents and friends, to teachers, classmates and, of course, the young people themselves, suicide among youth is a problem that affects everyone. Unfortunately, many educators, who spend most of the day with young people, are unable to help their students in such difficult times. School personnel are often unaware of the warning signs, unable to recognize them, or ill equipped on how to handle the situation if they do happen to notice something. In short, teachers are unprepared to deal with students suffering from depression with suicidal tendencies. Bill H.4013: An Act relative to suicide prevention training in schools directly seeks to change this problem. The bill would mandate two hours per year of suicide prevention training programs in schools as part of teachers’ professional development in order to prepare and train them on how to handle suicidal and depressed youth.

■ The Bill

H.4013: An Act relative to suicide prevention training in schools

■ Excerpt from Storybook

Jen Kelliher works for the Massachusetts Coalition for Suicide Prevention. She recounted a story that she heard:

“There was suicide prevention training in school district where there had been a suicide and because of that training, faculty noticed that one of the kids was acting off. He was giving possessions away. The faculty called the police. That night, the police found student on train tracks and saved his life. These are life and death situations and the trainings do make a difference.”

Catherine recounts the story of what happened and how she felt when she found out that her friend had committed suicide.

“We thought it was an accident, a mistake. How could we have known? What could we have done to help her? I think each one of us felt responsible because we didn’t just...we just...
Jen Kelliher of the Massachusetts Coalition for Suicide Prevention implemented training programs success has been seen. Even in MA where some schools have voluntarily implemented suicide prevention training, other states have passed similar bills with successful outcomes. Complete the training through self-review of materials. School and outside of school. Teachers can independently complete the training through self-review of materials. Teachers can independently complete the training through self-review of materials. We are Brandeis University students and we are here today to talk about suicide—which is a very serious matter that is not talked about enough. We all know about the tragedy that happened in Newton—there were three student suicides in a period of four months—but we are here to tell you that this is not just a Newton problem and we have to do what we can to prevent it from happening again. Sarah Sue and I...we're students too. These are our peers, our friends, our younger siblings. And we need to recognize the signs before it's too late. Suicide is the third leading cause of death among young people between the ages of 15 and 24. The number of suicides in Massachusetts is almost 3 times higher than the number of homicides. In MA public schools today, teachers are not equipped to recognize suicidal students. There is already legislation about training teachers to notice and report child abuse, and suicidal students. In Massachusetts itself, there are almost three times as many deaths by suicide as there are by homicide. This is why I am writing to you asking for your support with House Bill 4013: An Act relative to suicide prevention training in schools. By supporting this bill, you can actually help save lives.

Children spend most of their time during the day in schools; teachers, administrators, and other educators are in a prime position to spot changes in personality or other warning signals. It is therefore important, critical even, that they are trained in suicide prevention and to actually recognize these warning signals. The bill itself proposes to mandate two hours of suicide prevention training as part of professional development in schools. The training will include how to identify and refer students to appropriate services in school and outside of school. Teachers can independently complete the training through self-review of materials.

Furthermore, it is evident that these trainings work. 19 other states have already passed laws like this one, and studies done on the programs in states like Connecticut and Georgia have already proven to reduce suicide among students. In Massachusetts itself, where there have been schools that have voluntarily implemented suicide prevention training programs, there have been similar successes. To quote Jen Kelliher of the Massachusetts Coalition for Suicide Prevention as she recounts a success story, “There was suicide prevention training in school districts where there had been a suicide and because of that training, faculty noticed that one of the kids was acting off. He was giving possessions away. The faculty called the police. That night, the police found student on train tracks and saved his life.”

Will the representative speak with the chair of the Committee on Health Care Finance and report the bill out favorably?

Letter to the Legislator

My name is Nikki Friedman and I, along with my colleague Sarah Sue Landau, am a student, of Brandeis University and residents of Waltham. I am writing you because I am concerned about the lack of understanding regarding recognizing the signs of suicidal youth. In light of what has happened in Newton this past academic year, this issue is more urgent than ever. Suicide is always preventable, but without an ability to recognize the signs, children slip through the cracks. Suicide is the third leading cause of death among youth between the ages of 15 and 24 years old, not to mention the fact that in Massachusetts, there are almost three times as many deaths by suicide as there are by homicide. This is why I am writing to you asking for your support with House Bill 4013: An Act relative to suicide prevention training in schools. By supporting this bill, you can actually help save lives.

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going to see her, but when we got to where she lived
night she died – me and three other of our friends were
I knew, or at least, thought I knew. I can remember the
but it's true. Kat was one of the brightest, happiest people
None of us had seen it coming. I know everyone says that,
becoming one of my closest friends, committed suicide.

Op-Ed

When it comes to suicide nobody knows what to do and
that's scary. Sure, that's an exaggeration – there are experts
and medical professionals who know what to do. But no
layperson knows what to do and that's a huge problem –
especially because training can be so easy to get. When
young people commit suicide everyone panics – but if you
train the people who that young person comes in contact
with every day, people like teachers, then you can stop the
panic and maybe even stop the suicide.

Suicide is the third leading cause of death
among young people between the ages of 15 to 24. In
Massachusetts suicides are nearly three times more
common than homicides. And in spite of this, it takes a
tragedy for people to even begin to talk about it. That's
what happened in Newton when three students took their
own lives in the last academic year between October and
February. That's what is happening all over the state, and
the country. And that's what happened to me.

Several years ago, my friend Kat, a girl who was fast
becoming one of my closest friends, committed suicide.
None of us had seen it coming. I know everyone says that,
but it's true. Kat was one of the brightest, happiest people
I knew, or at least, thought I knew. I can remember the
night she died – me and three other of our friends were
going to see her, but when we got to where she lived
there were police cars and an ambulance. We weren't told
anything, we were just shuffled into a room and told to
wait. Several hours passed, we found out she had been in
the shower. I thought she had slipped and fallen. I thought
maybe she had cracked her head, needed surgery. I thought
we might need to go spend the night in the hospital with
her. But I never thought she was dead, let alone that she
took her own life. When the four of us were finally told
none of us could breathe. We couldn't move. And then
suddenly we started crying, and didn't stop. Not for days.
We called the rest of our friends. We didn't know why she
did what she did, and we never would. We were scared
and confused – no one was really telling us anything, and
we didn't even know the questions to ask. This is the
panic. We didn't know she was suicidal, and I don't think
anyone did. This is the unpreparedness. Because it wasn't
just us who didn't notice. None of her teachers were able
to identify the signs. Nobody around her – even people
who saw her every day – could recognize that there was
something wrong.

But if our teachers had been trained in recognizing the
signs of suicide they probably would have, even if she put
on a brave face for us, her friends. It hurts every day – to
have been left behind and have no answers. It hurts to
think that maybe I could have done something, or maybe
someone could have done something, if only anyone had
known or noticed. I miss her, and at this point, there's
nothing I can do.

So what's the point? What can be done to prevent this
from happening to other kids? To keep other people from
being left behind, confused, scared, like I was, like the
students in Newton are? To save the lives of students who
are thinking of taking their own? We can train. Suicide
prevention training initiatives are effective when they are
implemented. By training the teachers, administrators, and
all school personnel in suicide prevention methods and
research, the education of the general community can be
improved and students’ lives can be saved. Between the
ages of 5 and 18 students spend the majority of their time
at school, so it makes the most sense to train the people
who see them the most, who are most likely to recognize
signs of depression and suicidal thoughts.

These goals can all be accomplished with a bill
currently in the Massachusetts Legislature: H.4013 – An
Act relative to suicide prevention training in schools.
This will enable the training of all school personnel in
suicide prevention issues. So please, contact your local
representative and senator. Tell them you support the bill,
and that they should too. Because that's how to save a life.
**Excerpts from Campaign Journals**

**Nikki**

One of the most important meetings I attended was also the very first meeting I attended: the open hearing at Newton South High School in February. It had only been a week or so after the third student suicide that Newton had seen since October, and they held an open forum at the school. A large portion of the town of Newton was there – particularly students and parents of the students at Newton South, as well as most of the school board and administration and several psychologists, specialists from the Riverside Emergency Services, and members of the Samaritans [part of the Massachusetts Coalition for Suicide Prevention].

For the first bit of the meeting, there was a large talk in the auditorium for everyone. Here, the principal of the school spoke, as did the superintendent about the tragedy of suicide and how it had affected their school. Then the Psychologist and Specialist from Riverside Emergency Services spoke about suicide more clinically, but also about what can be done to prevent it, and resources that are available to everyone now post-tragedy, and in the future to prevent another one. After the large meeting, we all split off into smaller groups to talk with counselors or administrators about next steps. I went to the smaller meeting with the school board, principal, and superintendent. Most of the people present at this meeting were parents, who were angry and scared on behalf of their kids. They spent most of the meeting criticizing the administration, the pressure they put on students, the fact that their kids still had exams and tests the day after the tragedy, et cetera. But there were also a couple of students there. They had a very different perspective from their parents. They were scared too, but they just wanted information. They didn’t think it was the school putting pressure on them, and while they were worried about exams, they mostly wanted to know what was going on, and they wanted the ability to come together in their time of need.

**Sarah Sue**

We found ourselves packed into the over-full auditorium of Newton South High School with hundreds of grieving parents. We listened to speeches given by the school’s superintendent, the mayor of Newton, a school psychologist and a member of the Riverside Trauma Center. Each speaker stressed that the community was doing all it could to heal in the aftermath of such tragedy and how the most important thing to do is let your kids know that they can always turn to you and that they are never alone. I took notes as they spoke.

... Although the topic of conversation for most of the night didn’t revolve around training for school personnel and although we did not speak to anyone directly at the event, I think that our attending the event was very beneficial. It allowed us to personally connect to the topic and see first hand how a suicide can affect a school and a community at large. It showed us why suicide prevention training for teachers is so necessary. Additionally, it gave us firsthand accounts to use in our storybook and bring up when lobbying to legislators. It might have been nicer if we had the opportunity to interview some of the people who attended the event (including representatives from the Massachusetts Coalition for Suicide Prevention), since they were clearly knowledgeable about the topic, however, given the melancholy mood, we didn’t feel that it was appropriate.

**Update**

As of September 12, 2014, H.3793 had been placed in the Orders of the Day for the next sitting for a second reading.

**For more information**

Massachusetts Coalition for Suicide Prevention
http://www.masspreventssuicide.org/
There are students who have lived almost their entire lives in the Commonwealth, attended high school, studied hard, perhaps had jobs and volunteered in the community, but must pay out-of-state rates at local colleges because they are not technically residents. Often brought to this country – this state even – as young children, these undocumented students (through no fault of their own) cannot afford to attend public colleges at the excessively high out-of-state costs.

For some perspective, University of Massachusetts Amherst, a popular state university, charges $13,000 a year to residents – though not an insignificant amount, substantially less than its out-of-state rate: $27,000. The in-state tuition bill seeks to deconstruct this barrier to higher education for undocumented students in Massachusetts.

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**The Bill**

*S.577, An Act regarding higher education opportunities for high school graduates in the Commonwealth*

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**Storybook Excerpt**

Nelsy, a current student at a public college in Massachusetts, was brought from Mexico to Massachusetts as a 6-year-old. She attended public school in MA for years, never knowing she was different from her classmates. After graduating 8th grade, when her classmates were thinking about high school, Nelsy’s parents informed her of her undocumented status. Her dreams of college evaporated. During her junior year of high school she started working two jobs, trying to raise enough money to afford college classes at the costly international rate, a burden that in-state tuition would have eased. Not wanting to accept charity, Nelsy has struggled to continue.

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**Elevator Speech**

Hi, my name is Sneha Walia – and my name is Sela Brown – and we are students at Brandeis
University. As college students ourselves, we are extremely passionate about ensuring equal opportunity to all hard-working students who wish to attend college.

Currently in Massachusetts though, high-achieving students who were brought to the US as children – without papers – are denied access to in-state tuition rates at public universities. And because these students must pay out of state rates, and often out of pocket, many cannot even afford to attain their dreams of college.

There is actually a remedy to this issue that’s already been proposed: A bill that attempts to level the playing field by providing in-state rates to all hard-working high schoolers in Massachusetts – regardless of their citizenship status. Unfortunately, this bill did not pass in the current legislative cycle.

However, 15 states across the nation – even the more typically conservative ones – have already passed similar legislation. Massachusetts is so often a leader in progressive legislation that grants equal rights and opportunities, and we want to ensure that high schoolers from the Commonwealth are not left behind.

Massachusetts has avoided this topic for years, sending the in-state tuition bill to study on multiple occasions. We want to inform you of importance of this issue, and to ask you to support the in-state tuition bill in the next legislative cycle.

**House Ways and Means Script**

Equal opportunity for all is an essential value that Massachusetts – and the United States – holds very dearly. In Massachusetts, though, high students are not all treated equally, or provided equal opportunity, when it comes to attending public universities and colleges. Current law requires documented citizenship status as a requisite for receiving in-state tuition rates at universities and colleges in the Commonwealth. As a result, undocumented students – who were brought to the US as children through no fault of their own – are denied these rates. Even though these students have attended Massachusetts’s high schools and lived here for years, they must pay the exorbitantly high out-of-state tuition rates if they wish to attend a public college.

We believe that this unequal treatment of hard-working students contradicts Massachusetts’s commitment to providing equal opportunity and access to those living in the Commonwealth. All students deserve the opportunity to pursue their academic dreams, and college can be an integral part of that process. Moreover, it is actually a detriment to the state budget to essentially bar students from post-secondary education. Because the majority of these undocumented students cannot afford to pay out-of-state rates, many choose to forgo college altogether – meaning that those public colleges lose out on potential revenue.

While undocumented students face many other problems, there is a solution that would ensure equal access to public universities. Legislation providing in-state tuition rates to undocumented high school students can be a major step in making college more accessible to them. A bill regarding in-state tuition has been proposed in the Massachusetts State Legislature, but has been sent to study for the last two legislative cycles. The lack of support in the State Legislature for this critical legislation is disheartening to us as state voters.

Understandably, there are concerns about the financing of this bill. One question that arises is: would this bill mean the state is financing the education of undocumented students? No. In fact, this bill is revenue neutral, and the state would not be providing these students with money directly. Simply put, this bill allows undocumented students to pay the same in-state rates that their classmates would pay at public colleges and universities. Any potential flow of money would go from the students to state institutions – but at the proper, equitable, in-state rates.

As we discuss equal opportunity, we understand that some may disagree with the logic of that ideal. Should Massachusetts really be funding the education of students who came here illegally? Luckily, this bill is not framed in that way. A better question is: can colleges and universities in the Commonwealth afford to lose potential revenue from hard working students simply because of their citizenship status?

Implementing this bill would not mean a loss of revenue for the Commonwealth equal to the difference of out-of-state and in-state rates. Since these students are not eligible for federal aid or assistance, and must pay out of pocket, out-of state rates [which can be up to 3x times higher] effectively exclude these students from higher education altogether.

Since 15 other states have already passed this legislation, we can look to their experiences and see that in fact, not only do students, but also the public colleges and universities themselves, benefit economically.

In 2011, Rhode Island passed very similar legislation that allows undocumented students to be eligible for in-state rates. The next year, 74 undocumented students enrolled in classes at public colleges and universities in Rhode Island. 71 of them enrolled at the Community College of Rhode Island. Their rates are approximately $4000/year for residents [and out of state rates are
over $10,000 dollars!] While there isn’t enough data to determine how many (if any) undocumented students were attending college and paying at out-of-state rates, due to their disadvantaged economic position in society, it is likely that few were paying those high rates.

So, implementing that legislation means that Rhode Island Community College earned approximately $284,000 from those 71 students in 2012. This case study from Rhode Island also helps eradicate the fear that undocumented students would “crowd out” US citizens from attending college. For those 71 students, this bill offered a way for them to affordably attend college (while offering the college a boost in tuition revenue!), but in the scheme of things, 71 students is a fairly negligible number in regards to university enrollment.

We bring up that Rhode Island case simply to elucidate the numerous benefits that this bill would bring to Massachusetts. At such a minimal cost, and while reaping such benefits, there is so little for Massachusetts to lose, and a huge opportunity for undocumented students to gain. Though the in-state tuition bill was sent to study for the second time this legislative cycle, we implore you to continue supporting the bill in the next legislative cycle. We will do our part to ensure that the bill is voted out of Committee favorably in the next legislative cycle, and ask you to please consider voting it favorably out of the Ways and Means committee thereafter.

■ Op-Ed

In Massachusetts, a 4.0 GPA is not enough to get you to college. Nelsy is an intelligent, hard-working student. But it was difficult for her to watch her classmates get excited about the prospect of college when she realized that her home state essentially prohibits her from attending.

The cost of college is high. Massachusetts understands this, which is why it provides reduced in-state tuition rates to Commonwealth residents at public colleges and universities. These lower rates should make it possible for students like Nelsy to receive a higher education.

However, Nelsy is not quite like her classmates. Yes, she studied hard. Yes, she earned good grades and volunteered in her community…but Nelsy is from Mexico. Her parents brought her here without documentation when she was only 4 years old. Due to this unlucky circumstance, in which she played no decision-making role, Massachusetts denies her a college education.

Many states across the United States – 15, at the latest count – have enacted laws and policies ensuring that undocumented students also receive in-state tuition rates at public universities and colleges. The bills require that the student attend high school in that state for at least 3 years, and that the student apply for citizenship. These states, conservative and liberal ones alike, understand that this is an educational issue, not an immigration one. Frankly, it is embarrassing that Massachusetts has not passed a similar such policy.

Nelsy likes school. As a young, hopeful 17-year old, she was thrilled at the possibility of attending college. She dreamed of starting her own business [in Massachusetts]. Instead, five years later, Nelsy wonders whether she will ever have a college degree. She has tried to pay her way out of pocket, at the extraordinarily high out-of-state fees [though she has lived in Massachusetts for nearly 18 years], but she cannot continue. Courses, after all, are thousands of dollars apiece.

What possible incentive do we have to keep students like Nelsy from going to college? By not providing in-state rates, Massachusetts leaves Nelsy without a college education and without an adequate means to support herself. Instead, she is afraid. She works off the books at low-skilled jobs, struggling to pay for textbooks, classes, and even her next month’s rent.

I have lived in this state longer than some of my classmates, she muses. It is her home, yet she cannot contribute back. She cannot get a college degree or start a business because Massachusetts makes the cost of college simply unaffordable for Nelsy and many other undocumented students like her.

Nelsy is not asking for a handout. Massachusetts should let her pay for college, simply at the same, fair rate as that of her classmates and peers. This would not only benefit numerous students, but also show Massachusetts’ commitment to education and to fostering an equitable academic environment.

There is no reason why Massachusetts should deny its high-school graduates a means to finance their own education. We need to speak for students like Nelsy. Call your state representative today, and inform them of the importance and necessity of the in-state tuition bill.

■ Excerpts from Campaign Journals

Sela

Although we were unable to meet with a coalition [due to the fact that there was not much of a coalition behind the bill at this time], I met and interviewed three separate students who were or are involved with SIM, the Student Immigrant Movement. On March 27th, I met with Nelsy, a 22-year old undocumented student who worked with SIM for many years.
This meeting was extremely important because it really solidified the importance of the bill I was lobbying for, and put a face to the bill. We met in a Whole Foods by North Station, and she told her personal story, and how the bill would impact her life.

Meeting with Nelsy also helped me understand the complexities of her situation, and why there has not been much activity lately by immigrant groups. (Many people are waiting on a federal bill, and the Massachusetts bill had not passed in two previous legislative cycles, so many have lost hope.) One thing I would have done differently (if it had been possible) would have been to meet in a quieter place so that we could talk more privately. I think for a bill like this, it is also imperative that there is a strong, vocal, public group of supporters who are personally affected by the bill. If I had also been able to meet Nelsy in the context of a SIM meeting, that might have been beneficial. I think that connecting with a coalition, or affected constituents, earlier on would have been a useful strategy that I would employ if I were to advocate for another bill in the future.

Sneha

Early on in our advocacy process, Sela and I struggled to connect with coalitions regarding our bill. Going into this process, we knew that many coalitions were looking to other bills that they expected would be more successful in the legislative process. We did, over email, make a connection with individuals working at MIRA, Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition. Early emails primarily consisted of us trying to find contacts at MIRA who were working on this bill. Once we made contact, we tried to see what they were working on in terms of meetings or events that we could attend. As we had expected, the majority of their activities related to other bills, such as the driver’s license bill that was also up this year.

It was initially frustrating to think that individuals who are engaged with advocacy for immigrants were not actively working on this bill. We chose, then, to look to student activists in our Brandeis community who were working on issues related to immigration and who were interested in this bill. After talking to student leaders in Brandeis Students for Immigrant Education, we realized there were students on our own campus who were knowledgeable about this bill and this issue.

 Update
As of September 12, 2014, S.577 had been sent to study.

For more information
National Immigration Law Center
www.nilc.org
Advocacy for Policy Change: Brandeis students work to reform Massachusetts law

Congo Conflict
Minerals

Stop Massachusetts companies from using conflict minerals

Colin Markel ’14
Dominic Schwartz ’14

Similar to Sierra Leone with the notorious “Blood Diamond” conflict, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has also been cursed with an abundant amount of mineral wealth, estimated to be as much as $24 trillion. Because of a weak government coupled with a lack of economic opportunity, the mineral mines are now controlled by illegal armed rebels. These rebels exploit the natural resources of the Congo. They sell the minerals they steal from the Congolese government to smelting companies all over the world. The companies use these “blood minerals” to create the small necessary parts that make up our favorite electronic devices. So when the electronics companies buy these parts from the companies and combine them in our electronics, they are also endorsing the illegal rebel groups. An Act relative to Congo conflict minerals aims to discourage the state – and state agencies – from contracting with companies who either don't track their supply chains or whose supply chains are tainted by human rights abuses. In this manner, the government can ensure that the economic interests of the state are not directly funding the armed militia groups responsible for the murder and sexual abuse of over 5,400,000 civilians.

The Bill

H.2898: An Act relative to Congo conflict minerals

Elevator Speech

Mines in eastern Congo are controlled by armed groups that illegally tax, extort, and coerce civilians to work. The groups are often affiliated with rebel groups, or groups within the Congolese National Army, both who use rape and violence to control the local population and the flow of minerals in Eastern Congo. The Congo has a large mineral wealth, but the use of intimidation through murder and rape compromises The Congo's business structure and their reputation on the world stage. Studies show that this crisis has resulted in the deaths of more
than 5 million people since 1998 and continue to cause as many as 45,000 deaths each month. A lot of this violence is linked intrinsically with the mining operations of minerals used to produce tantalum and tungsten.

Bill H.2898 looks to control and monitor the supply chain coming from the regions where violence is most associated. It contains an auditing system that would identify conflict minerals used in imported goods. It would create more transparency in the mineral trading process and would hold companies accountable for their practices. The government would monitor and regulate all of the goods involved, through the Security and Exchange Commission, thus requiring importers to report the content of their materials. This way the origin and process would be verified, and the bill would be successful in achieving what its proponents have been fighting for, ending the human rights abuses in the Congo.

Letter to the Legislator

Our names are Colin Markel and Dominic Schwartz and we are asking for your support with Bill H.2898, *An Act relative to Congo conflict minerals*. The bill is concerned with mines in eastern Congo that are controlled by armed groups that illegally tax, extort, and coerce civilians to work. These groups use rape and violence to control the local population and the flow of minerals in Eastern Congo. The Congo has a large mineral wealth, but the use of intimidation through murder and rape compromises The Congo’s business structure and their reputation on the world stage. Studies show that this crisis has resulted in the deaths of more than 5 million people since 1998 and continue to cause as many as 45,000 deaths each month.

Bill H.2898 looks to control and monitor the supply chain coming from the regions where violence is most associated. It contains an auditing system that would identify conflict minerals used in imported goods. It would create more transparency in the mineral trading process and would hold companies accountable for their practices. The government would monitor and regulate all of the goods involved, through the Security and Exchange Commission, thus requiring importers to report the content of their materials. This way the origin and process would be verified, and the bill would be successful in achieving what its proponents have been fighting for, ending the human rights abuses in the Congo.

Arguments of opponents to Bill H.2898 have their points grounded in the inefficiency of the bill as well as the fiscal consequences of the bill for both Massachusetts and The Democratic Republic of the Congo. The law has been criticized because it does not address the real causes of the conflict and human rights violations. The fact of the matter is, these arguments have no legitimate holding because the bill will definitely provide transparency to the mineral supply chain, and will not only cut off a significant portion of the mining companies that violate human rights, but it will send a message around the world that Massachusetts is a leader in protecting human rights, at home and abroad.

Other arguments that have been made revolve around the massive amount of paperwork the bill will cause public technology firms. The main argument is that this paperwork will do nothing but eliminate jobs and lower exports in the Congo. Opponents believe the law imposes a de facto embargo on mineral production that would impoverish the region’s million or so artisanal miners. However, once the market stabilizes, and the SEC and Massachusetts identify which companies are ok to work with, there will be a resurgence of mining and the companies that support human rights will be highly rewarded. The companies that do not uphold human rights values will be shut down because of the shut off of supply to Massachusetts, especially when other states continue to follow suit. We’re asking for your progressive support with this issue.

House Ways and Means Script

Many regions of the world, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, are home to a devastating crisis involving conflict minerals. These minerals are obtained in the midst of rape and violence directed at innocent, defenseless civilians. Because the area of the Congo has such a great amount of mineral wealth, it is a prominent location for mining, and many of the minerals are imported into the U.S. and used for local goods. It is a clear violation of human rights that has resulted in the suffering and death of millions. Rape and violence have become tools used by local armed rebel groups that are now commonplace in such areas. Fighting this issue has been a major struggle, partially because conflict minerals are so heavily used and the profits made by their sale are so appealing.

Mines in eastern Congo are located in remote and dangerous regions in which armed groups are present at more than 50% of mining sites. At many sites, armed groups illegally tax, extort, and coerce civilians to work. Miners, including children, work up to 48-hour shifts amidst dangerous mudslides and tunnel collapses that kill. The groups are often affiliated with rebel groups, or with the Congolese National Army, both who use rape and violence to control the local population and the flow of minerals in Eastern Congo.

The bill proposes that the situation must be governed more effectively, and the companies involved in the market must be held to stricter standards. It contains an auditing
system that would identify conflict minerals used in imported goods. This would help successfully separate the mineral market from the horrific breach of human rights that is currently associated with it. It would create more transparency in the mineral trading process, as well as hold companies much more accountable for their practices. The government would have monitors that would be able to regulate all of the goods involved, thus requiring importers to report the content of their materials.

The Congo has a large mineral wealth, which is a blessing for commerce and GDP, but the intimidation through murder and rape used to run the business compromises their business structure and reputation on the world stage. Studies show that conflict and the related humanitarian crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo have resulted in the deaths of more than 5 million people since 1998 and continue to cause as many as 45,000 deaths each month. Sexual violence and rape remain tools of intimidation used by parties in the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of Congo to terrorize and humiliate communities, resulting in community breakdown. This causes a decrease in the ability of affected communities to resist control by illegal armed forces and a loss of community access to minerals. Sexual violence and rape affect hundreds of thousands of women and girls, frequently resulting in trauma, other severe genital injuries, and long-term psychological trauma. A 2007 report released by the Government Accountability Office describes how the mismanagement and illicit trade of resources from the Democratic Republic of Congo supports conflict between militias and armed domestic factions in neighboring countries.

Arguments of opponents to Bill H.2898 have their points grounded in the inefficiency of the bill as well as the fiscal consequences of the bill for both Massachusetts and The Democratic Republic of the Congo. The law has been criticized because it does not address the real causes of the conflict and human rights violations. Opponents believe that the “due diligence” clause has not added any transparency to the mineral supply chain, but has halted legitimate mining ventures that provided livelihoods for the Congolese citizenry and has reduced the Congo’s legal exports of tantalum by 90%. The fact of the matter is, these arguments have no legitimate holding because the “due diligence” clause will definitely provide transparency to the mineral supply chain, and will not only cut off a significant portion of the mining companies that violate human rights, but it will send a message around the world that Massachusetts is a leader in protecting human rights, at home and abroad.

Other arguments that have been made revolve around the massive amount of paperwork the bill will cause public technology firms. The Dodd-Frank requirement says these firms must provide in depth reports for the Securities and Exchange Commission about how and where they purchased their minerals. The main argument is that this paperwork will do nothing but eliminate jobs and lower exports in the Congo. Opponents believe the law imposes a de facto embargo on mineral production that impoverished the region’s million or so artisanal miners.

These arguments also have no legitimate holding, as the process by which these firms provide “due diligence” is nothing compared to the amount of secretarial work these firms have to complete. From a fiscal standpoint, this new work will actually add more jobs to these firms as they try and keep up with the necessary “due diligence”. Additionally, once the market stabilizes, and the SEC and Massachusetts identify which companies are ok to work with, there will be a resurgence of mining and the companies that support human rights will be highly rewarded. The companies that do not uphold human rights values will be shut down because of the shut off of supply to Massachusetts, especially when other states continue to follow suit. We’re asking for your time, consideration and support with this issue.

Op-Ed

Electronics and gadgets are becoming a bigger part of society every day. What would you do without your cell phone? Your iPod? Your laptop? These items shape our lives through communication, information, and connection with the world. They are more to us than just the pieces of plastic and metal that they are made out of. Odds are you have one of these items with you right now. But have you ever stopped to think where it came from, or how it was made? Many of the minerals that are used to make these appliances come from the Congo. But why should that mean anything to you? Well, in many parts of the Congo, these minerals are mined in the midst of rape, violence, and other major human rights violations.

In these areas, innocent civilians like you and I are forced to work in the mines by armed rebel groups, and not only are they mistreated and overworked in dangerous conditions, but they are given nothing in return. Many of these victims are helplessness women and children that end up getting raped or killed. This crisis has resulted in the deaths of more than five million innocent people since 1998, and continues to cause as many as 45,000 deaths each month. Even the ones that survive suffer from severe injuries and lifelong physical and psychological trauma. And all for what? These material possessions that we have come to be so unhealthily dependent on. If our own fellow Americans – our family and friends – were victims of these...
atrocities, we would put an end to it immediately. But the families and friends of these Congolese citizens are in the mines with them, and have no voice. These people have no one to fight for them – we are the only ones that can make a difference.

A few years ago, President Obama signed the Dodd-Frank Act, requiring American companies to disclose whether they have used any conflict minerals. This was an important step in the right direction, but it is not enough to stop the violence. Bill H2898 looks to prohibit the Commonwealth of Massachusetts from contracting with any companies that do not comply with the regulations for certifying these minerals. While this still will not eliminate the problem altogether, it is an important progression that will send a message and help alleviate the situation. Massachusetts must step up and be a leader for this issue, so that other places will follow in their footsteps.

1,500 innocent people die every day from this brutality – that is the size of an entire school. Is that worth the best cell phones and best laptops at the best prices? We must sacrifice some of our luxuries so that other innocent people are not tortured and killed making them for us. So what if it becomes harder to make these products. So what if the prices rise a little. Using clean, conflict-free minerals will save millions of lives. We simply cannot allow this to happen to humankind. Every person deserves to have rights, and if we are the only ones that can help provide them, we have a responsibility to do so.

Excerpts from Campaign Journals

Colin

Advocacy for Policy Change has been a unique and interesting experience for me so far this semester. It is obvious that at this point in the semester, I have not taken the traditional route of this course. Of course, I have done the assignments asked of me to the best of my ability, but as far as actually taking to the spirit of a bill, and through hard work and advocacy moving it at a governmental level, I have not been able to. The task of really moving a bill through advocacy seemed daunting to me at the beginning of the semester, and so really interested me. It seemed like a great thing to learn about, and now this class has taught me how one would go about doing such a thing through advocacy. As someone who would like to eventually go into politics and definitely wants to go into law, this was a really exciting class to be in. Not only did I work on the side of the advocates, I learned about the governmental and policy making aspect of the process, through class as well as my own curious research.

Dominic

Because our bill is about the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the human rights violation going on there, it has been difficult to talk to knowledgeable sources and affected people without physically going to the Congo. Since it is not something that is based locally, we cannot see it firsthand or examine it within our environment.... Even though the elimination of conflict minerals could be bad for our economy, it does not justify the blatant and inexcusable violation of human rights in the Congo. If we learned one thing from this experience, it is that advocating for a bill takes hard work and dedication.

Update

As of September 12, 2014, H.2898 was in the House Ways and Means Committee.

For more information

Congo Action Now!
www.congoactionnow.weebly.com
The Hinton State Laboratory Institute (HSLI) provides services to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts that are integral to its health and prosperity. The HSLI’s sole purpose is to keep the Commonwealth and her citizens safe from infectious diseases, bioterrorism threats, viral epidemics, foodborne illness, insect-borne diseases, and other biological and chemical toxins. It accomplishes these tasks by maintaining high quality testing facilities, providing critical resources to health centers, and training health professionals to properly treat diseases and prevent avoidable transmission. An increase of $2.84 million to the HSLI is requested.

**The Line Item**

Line item 4516-1000: State Laboratory and Communicable Disease Control Services

**Storybook Excerpt**

HSLI tests populations that would not otherwise have coverage. We provide STD tests for school-based clinics. There are no other outside labs that are able to or can provide such a wide range of tests.

**Elevator Speech**

Our names are Sisana Farley and Dylan Schlesinger and we are two Brandeis students advocating for the Hinton State Laboratory Institute (HSLI), line item 4516-1000. Have you or anyone you know ever been sick and needed an immediate medical test? This is one of the many jobs that HSLI does. HSLI has a total of 17 labs, and is the first response to chemical and bioterrorism threats, statewide epidemics such as tuberculosis, and testing for all Massachusetts residents. Everyone is Massachusetts is affected by the testing and daily duties performed by this lab. For example, last year, HSLI was one of the first responders to the Boston Marathon Bombings. Despite the high number of tests...
performed, and the wide range of HSLI’s services, the lab is in critical physical condition and in dire need of repair. The poor conditions of the lab affect the speed of test results, due to maintenance problems with older equipment and poor electrical connections.

However, this can all be improved with additional funds. The recommended budget increase of $3.5 million will go towards Quality Assurance, specialized laboratory equipment that accelerates results, qualifies for federal funding, specialized services for contagious tuberculosis cases, in addition to other vital projects and preventions. Please support the Hinton State Laboratory Institute. Disease doesn’t discriminate.

### Letter to the Legislator

We are writing to express support towards line item 4516-1000, which will provide an increase in funding for the Hinton State Laboratory Institute (HSLI). HSLI is responsible for protecting residents of Massachusetts from threats such as bio-terrorism, lead poisoning, insect-borne disease, epidemics, rabies, HIV, hepatitis, and Sexually Transmitted Infections.

We are writing for your support for increased funding to the budget because HSLI directly affects the citizens in your district. The equipment has decayed over time and renovations to the facility are crucial. HSLI provides testing to all residents of Massachusetts, works first response to any chemical threat, and constantly works to discover new vaccines to severe diseases.

Lab Director Dr. DeMaria’s personal experience with HSLI strengthens the importance of all that Hinton does: HSLI tests populations that would not otherwise have coverage. Immigrants are often left out of health care reform, and 80% of Tuberculosis cases are foreign. We provide SDT tests for school based clinics. There are no other outside labs that are able or can provide such a wide range of tests.

The facility currently has one working elevator, dysfunctional air conditioning, inoperative security systems, and office spaces crammed with about twenty epidemiologists [when the space was meant for five]. HSLI does so much for the state of Massachusetts yet works in such conditions... we need to change this.

Your support to line item 4516-1000 will make a difference. Please respond to the address below. Thank you for your consideration. Action needs to be taken to secure HSLIs funding, and ultimately lives.

### House Ways and Means Script

The failure to provide a well-equipped and secure public health lab leaves Massachusetts’s residents at risk for public health epidemics, disease, and biohazards. The Hinton State Laboratory Institute, which is responsible for monitoring and testing for these concerns, is in desperate need for additional funding to continue its function. Although, the budget for HSLI has increased since FY 2014, it is not enough. We request additional funding for line item 4516-1000 to address Hinton’s serious technical and facility deficiencies.

HSLI provides a variety of services to the residents of Massachusetts. In brief, the Hinton State Laboratory Institute houses 17 laboratories. These laboratories test for communicable diseases, hazardous materials, and statewide epidemics. The Hinton State Laboratory Institute protects against known diseases and threats, such as: HIV, TB, Measles, Lyme Disease, Toxins, newborn diseases, AIDS, rabies, and many other issues. The lack of funding increases the probability of ineffective prevention, putting all of Massachusetts in danger.

The Hinton State Laboratory Institute is in extremely poor condition. Electrical problems affect the functionality of the lab. For example, HSLI uses Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS), which frequently requires maintenance. This laboratory management software program that tests samples, inventory and stores data, is dependent on electricity. If a patient has a time sensitive or unknown pathogen or disease, and electricity in the lab fails to work, the patient’s odds for survival decrease. However, when LIMS crashes due to electrical failure, lives are put at risk. The LIMS system is one of the many areas of the Hinton State Laboratory Institute that needs to be updated. If approved, additional funds requested would update the LIMS system to a more effective version, which will ultimately save lives and time.

Flawed conditions of the lab extend to laboratory equipment. With updated technology, outcomes will be predicted at a faster rate. Specialized equipment would allow Hinton to rely less on the state budget and qualify for federal aid. States around Massachusetts have received federal funding for “reference labs” which test ‘uncommon materials’, such as biohazards, chemicals, infectious diseases. The current physical layout makes it difficult to consider Hinton’s potential as federal reference lab. However, if the requested funds were approved HSLI would be a “top candidate”. Therefore, we recommend funds for a feasibility survey to initiate steps toward a federal reference lab.
The Hinton State Laboratory protects Massachusetts daily, yet to safeguard HSLI's research and results, we request funds for quality assurance jobs and tests. Additional quality assurance positions were in fact, recommended by recent inspectors. This recommendation provides the residents of Massachusetts with an increased level of protection.

HSLI works closely with the testing, treatment and prevention of tuberculosis. In 2013, there were seven cases of multi drug resistant tuberculosis; this is a dramatic increase from no recorded cases in 2012. In Wisconsin, one untreated case of tuberculosis resulted in $4.7 million in damages and clean up. It is understood that the Massachusetts budget is tight, however, the additional $3.49 million requested will protect all of Massachusetts, and is lower than the result of one untreated case. By supporting the recommended increase, it saves the state from paying more in the future.

Unfortunately, one of the concerns HSLI faces is the Annie Dookhan scandal. Let it be known, the drug lab in question remains separate from the Hinton State Laboratory Institute. The scandal takes away from the crucial work HSLI does. Last spring, HSLI was a first responder to the Boston Marathon Bombings. The Hinton State Lab is “one of only ten Level 1 Chemical Threat labs in the nation” This means HSLI can test an “expanded number of chemicals, including mustard agents, nerve agents, and other toxic industrial chemicals”. This lab is crucial to keeping Massachusetts safe against all threats, foreign and domestic.

HSLI is aware that the budget increase of $3,490,000 is a large financial contribution. However, without this increase, the Hinton State Laboratory Institute will fail to provide crucial and much needed services. The financial request is a necessary investment for a safer Massachusetts.

The financial contribution now is significantly lower than the cost of a statewide epidemic. The desired funds will go towards: increasing the productivity of HSLI, updated laboratory equipment, proper security systems, hired public health experts, and specialized services for contagious tuberculosis cases. Please support Hinton State Laboratory Institute to with the resources and staff preparedness. Line item 4516-1000 will provide the Hinton State Laboratory Institute to meet the needs and staffing needed to effectively prevent tuberculosis and concerns such as HIV/AIDS, lead poisoning, mosquito borne disease, and protection from chemical and bioterrorism.

In Wisconsin, the aftermath of one Tuberculosis case was $4.7 million. That’s more than the cost to safeguard all of Massachusetts against TB. If we are just waiting for an outbreak to admit the problem then this appears to be the perfect plan of attack. However, if those seven cases of TB were not found in time the cost would be $32.9 million.... Fiscally speaking, that is an irresponsible gamble to make. If you had TB wouldn't you want specialized tuberculosis clinics for active and contagious TB cases, testing to ensure that outbreaks do not become epidemics, and epidemic outreach to high risk areas, and training to identify TB? With $3.5 million, HSLI will ensure that these changes take place and protect Massachusetts.

Let's face it. Tuberculosis is scary. It can spread through breathing and at least 300,000 people in
Massachusetts alone have already contracted it and don’t even know. But there is hope through the HSLI’s budget increase. The additional 3.5 million dollars will ensure that Massachusetts is safe against TB. This relatively small increase is far less than the cost that will inevitably occur if there is a TB outbreak.

My abhorrence for blood and my “germaphobe” nature aside, the older woman is facing serious health concerns. What you can do is contact your local legislature, or senators to advocate for the Hinton State Laboratory Institute. There is no way to politely and honestly tell to someone who is coughing up blood, “Oh you’re probably fine.” They’re not. There needs to be an increase in teaching and awareness for tuberculosis because there is need to change. Right now, Massachusetts is riding the bus with TB. They are sitting next to her and even sharing her handkerchief. Before long, Massachusetts will be sick and we will not have the proper precautions in place. It is only a matter of time.

■ Excerpts from Campaign Journals

Dylan

I started learning the moment I began working on this line item. Having little education in health or the sciences [i.e. film and English major, legal studies and theater minor], I had no idea what the Hinton State Laboratory Institute was or why I should even be advocating for the program. Soon enough, Sisana and I uncovered all that Hinton has to offer, such as the constant testing and prevention of statewide diseases. Not to mention, a heavy focus on tuberculosis, which was seen on our campus last year when a student contracted the disease. In addition, Hinton’s first response team responded to the Boston Bombing to ensure the bomb wasn’t a dirty bomb [i.e. tested for poisonous gases or harmful toxins].

Learning all of this information has inspired Sisana and me to inform as many people as possible about Hinton. We have worked very hard on this line item. I feel very satisfied with the work we’ve done as well as all of the valuable information I have gathered. This course has given me the tools needed if I ever wanted to advocate another issue as well as the knowledge of how to pass a bill and the steps needed to make that happen. I am extremely satisfied with the knowledge and experience gained from this course and advocating for line item 4516-1000.

Sisana

Through my visits with representatives, legislatures and legislative aides, I have improved my public speaking and learned about the line item and bill process at the Massachusetts State House. In addition, I realized that while it is important to have a prepared speech, some of the most successful visits occurred when there was extra research done to the specific district we were going to. For example, in districts with large immigrant populations it is more effective to hone in on the contagious nature of tuberculosis with foreign communities, while communities such as Newton, were more interested in how insect borne diseases.

Awareness was the most important advocacy tool. Many legislators had a misconception of the Hinton State Laboratory and its association with the crime lab tainted by Annie Dookhan. Furthermore, they were not aware of the rising number of Multi Drug Resistant Tuberculosis cases. As the semester progressed, I learned the key to effective advocacy was to fill in the gaps of already existing knowledge.

■ Update

As of September 12, 2014, a budget of $14,145,385 had been allocated to line item 4516-1000. This falls short of the $16,630,000 requested by the Hinton State Lab.