Advocacy for Policy Change

Brandeis students work to reform Massachusetts law

October 2018
**Advocacy for Policy Change** is a part of a new national program, ENACT: The Educational Network for Active Civic Transformation. ENACT is made possible by generous gifts from Ethics Center International Advisory Board Member Norbert Weissberg and his wife, former Board Member Judith Schneider; Board member Mark Friedman; and the Rice Family Foundation.


For more information about the projects in this report, visit [www.brandeis.edu/ethics/atbrandeis/advocacy](http://www.brandeis.edu/ethics/atbrandeis/advocacy)

To learn about ENACT: The Educational Network for Active Civic Transformation, and to sign up for updates, visit [go.brandeis.edu/ENACT](http://go.brandeis.edu/ENACT)

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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 at the state level. Students are encouraged to think deeply about the complexities of shaping laws for constituents who hold diverse viewpoints about what is right and good for society and how to best progress through the legislative process. Students choose existing laws they feel could be credibly challenged on ethical or moral grounds, and advocate for state legislative change.

Now in its ninth 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 2018, we anointed 24 citizen advocates for such issues as immigrant rights, healthcare for women and disability rights.

Working in teams, the students research their chosen issues and design and implement models of legislative advocacy. State legislators and advocacy organizations advise each team to help them understand the lawmaking process, connect with colleagues, and set realistic goals. Each student completes a series of assignments related to the 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 five.) This anthology contains excerpts from these assignments, updates on the bills, and links to more information on the relevant issues or organizations.

Once again, I must thank several people whose support over the past nine 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, now Director Emeritus 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 Ethics Center Board member Jay Kaufman ’68, MA ’73 helped me create a course worthy of Brandeis University. An expanding list of exceptional teaching assistants made the course a reality: David Duhalde, Andrew Hart, Roz Kabrhel, Benjamin Kreider, Melissa Ross, Doug Smith, Cynthia Tschampl, and Christian Lopez.

This course is part of a national program based at Brandeis University launched in 2015, called ENACT: The Educational Network for Active Civic Transformation. Since the fall of 2016, ENACT Faculty Fellows have been teaching their own ENACT courses at colleges and universities in or near state capitals across the United States. There are now 29 Fellows in 29 states, and the program is expanding to all 50 states in the coming years.
Students in ENACT courses, like those in Advocacy for Policy Change, learn how to work with community organizations, state legislators and legislative staff members to advance policy. With the guidance of David Weinstein of the Ethics Center, ENACT has developed a robust national network of faculty, students and alumni that includes an online platform for resource sharing and collaboration.

In September I was appointed Interim Director of the International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life succeeding Daniel Terris, who earlier this summer became dean of the Al-Quds Bard College of Arts and Sciences at Al-Quds University in Jerusalem. In this new role, I have the privilege of further deepening my involvement with the national ENACT program.

ENACT is becoming a major voice in addressing challenges to American democracy by engaging young people around the country in civic activism built on knowledge, cooperation, justice and integrity. ENACT is supported by generous multi-year commitments from International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life International Board member Norbert Weissberg and his wife, former Board member Judith Schneider; Board member Mark Friedman; and the Rice Family Foundation. The students, Faculty Fellows and I are very grateful to them for their ongoing support. For more information, see go.brandeis.edu/ENACT.

Brandeis University students are committed to combining academic rigor with hands-on work in pursuit of social justice. Each year a new cohort of advocacy students develops skills that will serve them far beyond one semester. We look forward to supporting the next cohort of inspirational citizen advocates in Advocacy for Policy Change at Brandeis University and with the continued national expansion of ENACT.

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

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

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

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

I am honored to also serve as the Distinguished Legislator for ENACT: The Educational Network for Active Civic Transformation, a national expansion of the important work we have been doing at Brandeis University. We’ve created a great model here at Brandeis and the Massachusetts State House that is now inspiring and supporting engaged citizens across the nation. The network of students, faculty, activists and legislators we are building in ENACT is more important than ever, and I am excited to be a part of its growth and development.

**Jay Kaufman is a member of the International Advisory Board of the International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life.**

The students of “Advocacy for Policy Change” with Representative Kaufman’s colleagues at the Massachusetts State House, March 1, 2018.
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 2018. The assignments were designed to develop and demonstrate the students’ understanding of the issues and the advocacy process.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Final Oral Presentation: “Present and Defend”**
Bringing everything together, on April 18th, 2018, students gave brief oral presentations of their legislative advocacy projects and responded to questions from audience members.
With Automatic Voter Registration, eligible citizens of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts who interact with the Registry of Motor Vehicles and other State agencies will automatically be registered to vote, unless they opt out. The legislation also requires Massachusetts to further improve the accuracy of voting rolls by joining the Electronic Registration Information Center.

The Bill
S.373/H.2091: An Act automatically registering eligible voters and enhancing safeguards against fraud

Elevator Speech
Hi, we are Jonathan Goldman and Ravi Simon and we’re politics students with experience in public service and residents in Massachusetts. In order to give our communities a voice and improve the common good, it is imperative every citizen of the Commonwealth has the opportunity to vote. But that isn’t happening. Massachusetts has the 3rd worst voter roll in the United States. This means that thousands of voters are registered with wrong names and addresses. There are registered voters who no longer exist and there are voters who have registered but do not appear on the State’s voter roll. As a result, not only are we denying people the right to vote and wasting money in the process, but we take away people’s voice in government.

Automatic Voter Registration is a solution to this problem. With AVR, every eligible citizen of the Commonwealth who interacts with the RMV and other State agencies will be automatically registered to vote. The legislation also requires Massachusetts to further improve the accuracy of our voting rolls by joining the Electronic Registration Information Center. In Massachusetts, the communities with the lowest rates of registration are also the same communities who have been historically disenfranchised and prevented from being able to be at the ballot box. The areas with some of the worst environmental problems are the same areas with low registration. With a vote, we empower these communities.

Will Representative/Senator X speak with Speaker DeLeo to include Automatic Voter Registration on this year’s agenda so we can get a vote passed?
**Excerpts from Storybook**

Expert Testimony from Attorney General Maura Healey: “By automatically registering eligible citizens to vote, we make it easier for them to engage and participate in the electoral process. This makes our elections more accessible to all – particularly young people, those who move frequently, and minority voters.”

Emily Norton, Executive Director of MA Sierra Club: “Lifting barriers for individuals to vote can’t hurt; it can only make our elected officials more representative. Sierra Club supports this effort because lowering barriers to vote ensures that communities can receive environmental justice.”

**Op-Ed**

**Jonathan**

While we applaud ourselves for registering 500 voters at the March for Our Lives events, all of these children and adults could have already been registered if we had Automatic Voter Registration (AVR) in Massachusetts.

There are 700,000 unregistered voters in Massachusetts. Massachusetts is supposed to be the leader of progressive change, yet ten states and the District of Columbia have already approved AVR. We’re falling behind.

AVR is a simple, secure, and effective solution for both registering voters and engaging more voters. First, AVR is a seamless system which integrates voter registration into the RMV and MassHealth. Once the RMV or MassHealth collects the information required to register to vote, this information is electronically transferred to the central voter database and local registrars without additional forms or paperwork.

Second, as a part of AVR, Massachusetts would join the inter-state Electronic Registration Information Center which would add additional safeguards to our voting system which is currently one of the worst in the nation. As pointed out by Common Cause President Pam Wilmot in a recent interview, we “already collect key information about citizens and whether they’re eligible to vote” and in MassHealth you need to be a U.S. Citizen, so AVR would only make our systems even more secure.

Third, AVR has the potential to increase turnout and decrease costs. Oregon saw a 4.2% increase in turnout. Several states which have implemented AVR have also seen savings of $100,000s. This means that the savings from AVR could be funneled into improving our voting systems, for example, supporting our town and city clerks with early voting.

Let’s not wait for another massive social movement to register more voters. Let’s get this done today. Let’s pass AVR in Massachusetts.

**House Ways and Means Script**

My name is Jonathan Goldman and I am a Democratic State Committee Member, resident of Northampton, and student at Brandeis University. I am here with my colleague, Ravi Simon, a former intern for Representative Gentile, resident of Sudbury, and also a student at Brandeis. Over the past few months, we have been working on passing House Bill 2091: An Act automatically registering eligible voters and enhancing safeguards against fraud. As you may know, the lead sponsor on this bill was Representative Kocot who sadly passed away last week. Not only was he my representative, but he was someone I deeply respected. Now, more than ever, we are working hard to make sure his efforts in passing this bill were not in vain. We need your help in ensuring this bill is a priority for your committee and that it is voted out favorably.

AVR is an issue of importance to Ravi and me. This is because there are 680,000 eligible, but unregistered, voters in our Commonwealth. In order to give our communities a voice and improve the common good, it is imperative every citizen of the Commonwealth has the opportunity to vote. The ballot box is the vehicle for the voice of the people to reach town halls and Beacon Street. Yet, with less than 30% of voters participating in the last cycle of municipal elections, we need a jump-start to get more people involved.

AVR is the solution. Lowering the barriers to vote is critical to upholding the constitutional right to vote. Unfortunately, within the Commonwealth, the communities with the lowest rates of registration are also the same communities who have been historically disenfranchised and unable to access the ballot box. The areas with some of the worst environmental problems, issues such as pollution or waste, are the same areas with low registration. This is why reputable organizations such as the Sierra Club, Progressive Mass, ACLU, and over 60 others have come out to advocate for the passage of H. 2091.

With Automatic Voter Registration (AVR), eligible citizens of the Commonwealth who interact with the Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) and other State agencies automatically would be registered to vote, unless they say no. The legislation also requires Massachusetts to further improve the accuracy of our voting rolls by joining the Electronic Registration Information Center.

We know that AVR works. Take Oregon, for example, where AVR was implemented in 2015. They saw a 4% increase in voter turnout in the very next election cycle. Vermont is another great example. Between January and June 2017, after the implementation of AVR, Vermont processed or updated 12,344 voter registrations through their DMV. This was roughly a 62% increase from the previous year, which was an election year, unlike 2017. AVR in Massachusetts is a practical progressive issue which can bring this same boost to our Commonwealth.
I understand you may have potential concerns about how to pay for H. 2091, but the truth is that the finances which underpin AVR are completely sound. Implementation costs can be easily and fully covered by the State’s Federal Help America Vote account. After the controversy surrounding the Presidential Election in 2000, Congress recognized the necessity of reforming our nation’s voting systems. The Federal Government has continued to allocate funding to States since 2002 in order to ensure that critical election infrastructure gets updated. As a result, Massachusetts has tens of millions of dollars that can only be used for initiatives like AVR. The Commonwealth needs to make use of this money. Massachusetts has the 3rd worst voter roll in the United States, meaning that thousands of voters are registered with wrong names and wrong addresses. There are registered voters who no longer exist and there are voters who have registered but do not appear on the State’s voter roll. We need to use the money which Congress has allocated in order to catch up with the rest of the country.

Not only would AVR not cost taxpayers any money, but, based on implementation of AVR in other States like Oregon, AVR would actually save Massachusetts $100,000s of dollars. In the long-run, shifting to electronic systems will make the work of Town Clerks more efficient, eliminate costs from paper and ink, and make the system overall run far more smoothly. This is one of the many reasons that the Massachusetts Town Clerks Association have indicated they would be happy to see the passage of the House and Senate bills.

Mr. Chairman, I implore you to make this bill a priority and vote it out of committee favorably. By supporting this bill, you can elevate the voices of hardworking citizens and their communities so that they may be able to effectively advocate for themselves. Thank you.

#### Letter to the Legislator

My name is Ravi Simon and I am writing to you along with Jonathan Goldman. In addition to being students at Brandeis University, we are residents of Sudbury and Northampton, respectively. I recently interned with Rep. Gentile and Jonathan is the youngest member of the Democratic State Committee.

We first want to thank you for co-sponsoring H. 2091, An Act automatically registering eligible voters and enhancing safeguards against fraud. Your support in passing this legislation means a lot to Jonathan and me. There is more work that needs to done, however, in order to get the bill passed.

Jonathan and I are lucky. We come from privileged backgrounds which helped us to be engaged. Unfortunately, for the 680,000 eligible but unregistered voters in Massachusetts, that isn’t the case. This means that they’re missing the opportunity to have a voice in government to bring the change they need.

Automatic Voter Registration (AVR) is a solution to this problem. With AVR, every eligible citizen of the Commonwealth who interacts with the RMV and other State agencies will be automatically registered to vote. The legislation also requires Massachusetts to further improve the accuracy of our voting rolls by joining the Electronic Registration Information Center.

Not only would AVR not cost taxpayers any money, but, based on implementation of AVR in other States like Oregon and Vermont, AVR would actually save Massachusetts $100,000s of dollars. Implementation costs can be easily and fully covered by the State’s Federal Help America Vote account, which has tens of millions of dollars and can only be used for initiatives like AVR.

In addition to saving money, passing AVR in MA would also increase voter participation. Oregon and Vermont both reported a substantial increase in voter turnout when they passed AVR. In Massachusetts, this would translate to mobilizing students like us at the four colleges and Universities in your district, empowering more people to get involved, and improving political representation.

Our ask is simple. As you may know, the AVR bills S.1791 and H.2091 were recently voted out favorably from the Joint Committee on Election Laws and we expect the bill to come before the House Ways and Means Committee and House Steering Committee. In order to ensure this bill passes, we are requesting that you write a letter in support of AVR to Chairman Jeffrey Sánchez of the House Ways and Means Committee and Chairman James M. Murphy of the House Steering Committee.

#### Excerpts from Campaign Journals

Jonathan

**On Automatic Voter Registration Lobby Day**

With well over 50 attendees and nearly 20 organizations from the Elections Modernization Coalition of Massachusetts, I was impressed by the energy in the room. The purpose of the meeting was to teach people about AVR, organize them into lobby groups, and then have attendees go to their legislators and push them in favor of AVR. While this was not the first time AVR had been introduced, with a large number of co-sponsors, this session looked like the most favorable opportunity to pass AVR so they were attending to capitalize on that momentum. The meeting began with an introduction of AVR followed by Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey and lead Co-Sponsor Senator Cynthia Creem helping excite everyone and build up the importance of AVR.
With everyone excited after hearing the widely popular A.G. and Senator, each co-sponsoring organization in attendance had two minutes to explain why they supported AVR. The message which most stuck with me was from the Massachusetts Sierra Club Executive Director, Emily Norton, who pointed to the correlation of environmental disenfranchisement and areas of high voter suppression and a lack of registration.

In a follow-up phone call with Emily, I wanted to talk with her to learn more about what she viewed as the most effective ways to communicate the importance of AVR. The meeting was brief but substantive. Emily talked about the correlation between areas with high pollution and areas of low voter turnout and low voter registration. She then tied this to how AVR can be a tool of empowerment and holding people accountable. Noting that this messaging could turn off some people in power who were enjoying not being held accountable, Emily said that a better tactic could be saying that AVR empowers and makes sure more voices are heard.

Ravi

On a meeting with Representative John W. Scibak

We met with Representative Scibak and his legislative aide shortly after the meeting with Devon Nir (Common Cause, MA) to record him talking about AVR. This was actually a follow up meeting which we had planned a couple weeks prior, when we had visited the Statehouse on a class visit. When we originally visited Representative Scibak’s office, he was in legislative session and unavailable. His staff director, Kate Cone, however, took time out of her schedule to talk to us for over ten minutes about AVR. At the end, she offered to set up a meeting with the Representative.

When we first met Representative Scibak, I found him to be a little prickly. He talked quite a bit about how he wanted the meeting to be short. Yet, it quickly became clear that Representative Sybak cared deeply about AVR. He articulated some the arguments in favor of AVR, such as the importance of turnout, in really compelling ways based on personal experience.

One aspect of the meeting, which went particularly well, was the way in which we opened the conversation. Recognizing that the Representative was a little impatient and rather busy, Jonathan and I started by discussing the passing of Representative Kocot. We told him that we had been looking to have Representatives from Western Massachusetts rally to ensure his legacy and advocate for his bills, including AVR. At the sound of his name, Representative Scibak’s face and features softened and he became more receptive. Afterwards he readily agreed to be in our video. It was a powerful example of how personal connections can really cut through a meeting.

Update

As of June 27, 2018, the bill has passed, with an amendment, by the House Committee on Ways and Means.

For more information

View the bill:
malegislature.gov/Bills/190/H4320

Common Cause Massachusetts
comoncause.org/massachusetts
Bill S.2185 (An Act Relative to Criminal Justice Reform) will raise the criminal majority age from 18 to 19, allowing young people an extra year’s access to diversion programs that are designed to help them stay out of the adult justice system. Being convicted in the adult justice system has a permanent effect on an individual’s ability to secure employment, housing, and education. This bill would give these young people a chance to avoid a public criminal record that would affect the rest of their lives.

The Bill
S.2185: An Act relative to criminal justice reform

Elevator Speech
We’re Max and Ely, undergraduates at Brandeis University. For the future betterment of our communities, it’s essential that we give justice involved juveniles a fair shot to become contributing members of society. We’re concerned that with the current age of criminal majority, 18. They are adolescents who do not yet have fully developed brains and decision making abilities that are being forced into the adult criminal justice system. These young people deserve access to the diversion programs and counseling that were meant for them.

The current Senate criminal justice reform omnibus bill would raise the age to 19, giving this whole extra year’s worth of people a chance to engage in these diversion programs and grow into successful, mindful adults. We ask that you support these young people by supporting this by sending a letter to the Conference Committee on this bill.

Excerpts from Storybook
Testimony from an experienced social worker, Beth Mix: “I run a Youth Service Bureau program designed to divert young offenders from juvenile court [in Connecticut]. We have collected evidence that shows that punitive measures do not deter juvenile criminality. Children older than 18 could greatly benefit from being treated as children – because developmentally, they are not yet adults. I would like to see the age raised further because evidence and experience suggests this change would be likewise successful.”

Criminal Justice Reform
Increasing the age of criminal majority from 18 to 19

Maxwell Everson ’19
Ely Schudrich ’19

Ely Schudrich ’19 and Maxwell Everson ’19
Khalil Cumberbatch, The Avid Advocate: As the Associate Vice President of Policy at The Fortune Society’s David Rothenberg Center, Khalil leads the advocacy efforts for criminal justice reform on behalf of the organization’s thousands of clients every year. Khalil stated that raising the age of criminal majority is really about “actively including science in decision making” and is part of a national conversation about criminal responsibility. This is in reference to the fact that adult brains do not fully develop until at least 23 years of age, particularly the prefrontal cortex which helps control impulses and decision making. As a person who was impacted directly by these issues, Khalil is a passionate advocate for criminal justice reform, and he believes that raising the age of criminal responsibility is a viable way to reduce the mass incarceration epidemic.

Op-Ed
Maxwell

It’s the middle of April, the snow is melting, and kids are starting to look forward to their summer break. For soon-to-be graduates looking to find a job, this period of time of time can be both stressful and exhilarating. The task of entering the adult world is daunting, but the future is bright.

For young people with a criminal record, the future doesn't look as bright.

Even a criminal record containing non-violent offences can make it incredibly difficult to gain housing or employment. For a young person trying to figure those things out for the first time, it can become impossible.

Kids make mistakes. They have to learn not to listen to peer pressure, they have to learn not to shoplift, they have to learn not to disturb the peace. And for some kids, the learning process involves slipping up. In Massachusetts, if a young person happens to be over the age of 18 when that slip up happens, they will be handled in the adult court system, and given a criminal record. There are a number of reasons to raise the age of criminal majority, and housing is just one of them.

By raising the age of criminal majority, we give more kids access to diversion initiatives that are meant to teach and guide them to becoming more productive adults. This state has many programs meant to help troubled kids. These include things like counseling, mental health services, and family mediation visits. By throwing children in the adult justice system after they become 18, we’re cutting them off from valuable resources that they could still make good use out of. These programs are the key to turning small mistakes into real growth opportunities for young people, and we want as many of them to have access as possible.

When we look at the numbers, it becomes abundantly clear that we need to put the most effort into reforming young people. Currently, people between the age of 18 and 25 make up 29% of arrests, even though they only make up 10% of the population. Not only that, but this group of people is most subject to cyclical involvement in the justice system and repeating offences. In 2011, 76% of the people in this age group that were released from Houses of Correction went back to court within 3 years. Diversion programs keep these numbers from being even more alarming. If we raise the age of criminal majority to 19, we’re giving a whole extra years worth of young people the tools they need to break free from these destructive patterns.

Young people deserve a fair shot at becoming healthy, productive citizens. By raising the age of criminal majority and extending a hand to young people, we are taking action to create a community of more rounded, patient and healthy adults in the future. Call your legislators and tell them you support the raising of the age.

Letter to the Legislator

Firstly, we would like to thank you again for your time in meeting with us on February 28, in which we discussed the age of criminal majority. As we alluded to in our conversation, young people in Massachusetts who are arrested for a criminal charge are treated as adults the moment they turn 18. This means that they develop a permanent record, which keeps them from housing opportunities, job opportunities, and other resources essential to developing a comfortable life. It also means that they lose access to the many diversion programs that this state has specifically established to help young people get on the right track. Counseling and community service programs aim to make kids’ first offence their only offense, and they are necessary for counteracting the tendencies of an age group in which recidivism rates are naturally the highest.

A strong solution to this lies in the Senate criminal justice omnibus bill S.2200, which raises the age of criminal majority in Massachusetts from 18 to 19. The current age is arbitrarily chosen, and it marks a period in which young people’s decision making faculties still aren’t fully developed. By raising the age, we will be giving these young people access to the resources that were meant to help them become more productive members of our communities.

The cost of the bill was estimated to be upwards of eight million dollars. This sounds like a huge amount of money; however, it fails to consider several important factors that influence this figure. The 18-year-olds who would now be under the juvenile system would have had the same burden on the adult system, which is more expensive than the costs
of the juvenile justice system. So these costs are not new, they are just shifted. Furthermore, by helping these young people learn to be better decision makers, we save money that would be spent in future periods of incarceration, which is empirically higher in those who have been incarcerated as a juvenile.

This portion of the bill is essential to develop a healthier community full of young people who are given the care and attention they need to become the independent individuals we are looking for. In the final version of the criminal justice reform bill, the age of criminal majority needs to be 19. We ask that you send a letter to the Conference Committee for this Bill, and that you urge your colleagues in the House and Senate to do the same.

Excerpts from Campaign Journals

Maxwell

Meeting with Sana Fadel, Acting Executive Director for Citizens for Juvenile Justice

The meeting with Sana Fadel actually challenged a lot of assumptions I had made about lobbying. She was happy to hear from Ely and I, and we had a long conversation about what CFJJ did, as well as what the organization hoped citizen advocates would do to help. She emphasizes the importance of personal stories and testimony from people affected by the issue we were lobbying, just as had been said many times in class.

One thing I had wrongly assumed was that when we were speaking with legislators, we should bring up the fact that we were working with CFJJ. In my mind, that made it seem like we had more authority on the issues. However, Sana told us that bringing up lobbying organizations as a citizen advocate could be detrimental to your message. Professional lobbyists get paid to bring the pertinent information to the legislators. After that information has been brought, these legislators want to hear from people unaffiliated with those organizations: people who chose to lobby of their own volition. She said that bringing up our connection with CFJJ would dilute what we were trying to say by indicating that CFJJ might be influencing us.

She also had some really interesting things to say about differences in how to frame the issue when talking to Democrats versus Republicans. Previously, Ely and I had thought that it would be difficult to convince Republicans, but Sana said not to write them off. She said that she had had success by turning the issue into an economic one, and talking about all the money there is to be saved by keeping kids out of detention centers.

Talking with her was interesting and helpful, but also incredibly encouraging. Sometimes I can’t help but feel that I’m not qualified to be an advocate, even thought it’s a cause I really care about and one I’ve studied a lot recently. Our class has always been encouraging, but getting that same encouragement from a professional lobbyist for our issue was really incredible.

Ely

Meeting with Maxwell Geist, the Communications and District Director for Representative Kay Khan

We went into the meeting already knowing that Rep. Khan is publicly supportive of raising the age of criminal majority, but since this was our first meeting with a legislator’s office that we scheduled ourselves, Max and I really had the goal of learning more about the political landscape around this issue.

The three of us first talked about the general aspects of raising the age of criminal majority; one thing I specifically asked Maxwell about was the Senate Committee on Ways and Means’ financial assessment of raising the age, which was estimated to be $8,000,000 to $13,000,000. Maxwell stated that he was unsure as to how that figure was calculated. This largely seemed to be the case with the people with whom we met.

The conversation then shifted to how Max and I should go about lobbying for this issue, and Maxwell suggested that we talk to legislators in the conference committee. I think it was really useful to first meet with a legislator’s office which we know supported the issue, as this gave me and Max both the confidence to talk to other offices and we had an idea as to what meeting with someone would be like. One thing I would change about the meeting, however, is I would focus the conversation more on how to influence those in the conference committee since those legislators are typically not open to discussing their views on the issue to the public.

Updates

As of October 2018, the bill has failed to pass.

For more information

View the bill: malegislature.gov/Bills/190/S2185/

Citizens for Juvenile Justice cfjj.org
The Safe Communities Act would prohibit the use of public funds and resources for immigration enforcement purposes in the interest of protecting undocumented and other vulnerable residents. It would prohibit the state of Massachusetts and local law enforcement from contributing to or supporting the creation of a Muslim registry, or any other federal registry program designed to solicit information on protected identity. In addition, it limits Massachusetts law enforcement’s ability to collaborate with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

■ The Bill
S.1305/H.3269: An Act to protect the civil rights and safety of all Massachusetts residents

■ Elevator Speech
We are Shoshanah Weinreich and Emilia Feldman, and we represent dedicated advocates for immigrant rights in the state of Massachusetts. Only through responsible planning will we keep our communities safe from the excessive police force that endangers the lives of thousands of undocumented Massachusetts residents every day. Since President Trump’s election, the aggressive and unconstitutional crackdown on immigration has increased, with many executive orders and mass deportations. The White House’s stance on immigration has led to the perpetuation of racist rhetoric and has transformed the United States into a toxic nation, putting the lives of residents with different immigration statuses at risk. ICE arrests have doubled nationally since the president’s inauguration and they have tripled in New England. According to the American Civil Liberties Union, more than 88% of deportations in Massachusetts are due to immigration violations, rather than crimes.

It is time for Massachusetts legislators to put an end to this unjust treatment of undocumented communities, and we have a solution. The Safe Communities Act is the Commonwealth’s attempt to fight the disturbingly normalized racism and xenophobia initiated by the federal administration. By prohibiting police from acting as immigration officers, we can guarantee the protection of civil rights and safety, something our national leaders are currently not doing. Despite the original bill being sent to
study, a subsequent bill addressing concerns some individuals had about the original bill has gained the support of the Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association and the Major City Chiefs of Police.

Will the legislators in this chamber follow suit and work with their colleagues to get this redrafted bill passed, ensuring the commitment to safety of all citizens and as a means to protect the common good?

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**Excerpt from Storybook**

**Annie’s Personal Story**

Annie*, a Haitian immigrant, mother, business owner, and community leader who has faced immense hardships throughout her immigration journey. She arrived to the United States with her family and received no community-based support and was forced to live with the immense pressures immigrant communities must endure with little help from the state.

Since the election of President Trump, Annie has noticed a very clear increase of tension in her community that has put many undocumented and immigrant communities in dangerous situations. She believes that “Trump teaches kids and Americans to fight and hate. Everyone is scared of everyone. No one can trust anyone.”

Annie expressed her discomfort and fear that the police do not have the best interest of her community at heart and stated that there is no productive relationship between the Waltham immigrant community and local police.

The Safe Communities Act is fighting to ensure that the relationships between local police and immigrant communities is meant to protect every unique individual so that those living in communities like Annie’s may live without fear of deportation or negative interactions with law enforcement.

* Name changed for privacy.

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**Op-Ed**

**Emilia**

This nation is at a crossroads. The American people have been subjected to 443 days of President Trump spewing false information and spreading his xenophobic rhetoric from the Oval Office for the entire world to hear, and we must decide whether this is a trend that we are going to put to an end to.

Trump has vilified thousands of American residents whose identities do not perfectly align with his white supremacist and xenophobic idea of the ‘true’ American identity. One of the populations put at the highest risk under the Trump administration is the immigrant community. The president and his supporters have created a single identity that is constructed upon racist stereotypes and dangerous false narratives that have turned this country into a very dangerous space for immigrant communities. The United States of America is at a crossroads and our nation must decide whether we are going to accept Trump’s propagation of hate to define the way in which we value human life as a nation or if we are going to fight to make a change in our nation’s history.

President Trump’s campaign relied upon the demonization of Mexico and he has openly blamed the Mexican nation for sending gangs, criminals, and rapists across the border to the United States. His language regarding the construction of a wall to keep out desperate individuals and families fleeing violence in Central and South America plagued every newspaper and news outlet since start of his campaign, and unfortunately his presidency still relies on this same level dangerous closed-mindedness. The offensive language that Trump has spread regarding immigrant communities have grown into dangerous policies and government funded programs that place undocumented communities in grave danger every day. The president’s latest immigration actions have occurred just this week with his move to place National Guard members on the border and support of Arizona’s plan to deploy around 150 troops along theirs. The states along the Mexican American border are not the only ones adopting problematic policies and supporting the inhumane treatment of undocumented communities.

The quality of life that undocumented communities are able to experience has diminished since the election of President Trump and Boston has become a dangerous home to thousands of immigrants. The arrests made by the Immigrations Customs Enforcement, or ICE, have doubled nationally since the president’s inauguration and they have tripled in New England specifically. The detention rates of undocumented individuals have doubled, and according to the American Civil Liberties Union, around 88% of deportations in Massachusetts are status driven, rather than in reaction to true crimes. This is a trend that must be disrupted by forward-thinking legislation and advocacy by the American people. Change is on the horizon for this country as more and more marginalized American residents rally against the oppressive nature of our current president, and the inclusion of immigrant identities within this discourse is essential for the progression of this nation.

The Safe Communities Act is a piece of legislation whose language works to disrupt the relationship between ICE and local law enforcement while restoring much needed peace of mind within undocumented communities. This legislation is the Commonwealth’s major effort to fight the racism and xenophobia that is so deeply ingrained in this nation’s modern law enforcement systems. The bill’s original
language primarily drew a very important line between the responsibilities of immigration officials and local police departments, and this distinction is essential to the safety of every resident of the Commonwealth. This original bill is no longer progressing, but the essence of this piece of legislation has been passed on in different forms, rallying thousands of advocates and activists throughout the Commonwealth and the state.

You may be wondering why this simple distinction could really cause the systemic change needed in order to preserve peace and safety in undocumented communities. When a clear line is drawn to distinguish the rights and responsibilities of ICE agents and local police officers, it allows police departments to focus on protecting the residents of their communities regardless of their status. This would also protect police officers as it would limit their need to engage in work that falls above their training levels. Pieces of legislation such as the Safe Communities Act are a step in the right direction and while it is possible that this bill may not be progressing, it is essential that the Commonwealth stay committed to fighting for our friends, neighbors, coworkers, and classmates with varying relationships with documentation.

Immigrants make America great because immigrants have made America. The dehumanization of those with varying access to documentation has done an immense disservice to this country and the perpetuation of the Trump's hateful rhetoric must stop. We must protect the lives of this nation's most marginalized communities because until every American community is able to experience safety, no community will ever truly be safe.

House Ways and Means Script

Representative, we are honored to speak with you today. We are Shoshanah Weinreich and Emilia Feldman, dedicated advocates for bill H.4603, the Safe Communities Act. This bill is a vital piece of legislation for the state of Massachusetts and while it is possible that you may have concerns regarding the fiscal implications, we would like to reassure you that this bill is in fact a step in the right direction. The adoption of this bill would not only cut down government spending, but it would also relieve law enforcement agencies of unnecessary excess pressure.

The Safe Communities Act articulates the need for clearly defined boundaries between the duties of local law enforcement departments and ICE. This distinction will be beneficial for our communities because it will guarantee that police will be focused on their primary job of keeping the communities safe. Law enforcement agencies will no longer be permitted to act as immigration officers, and therefore their resources may not be used to engage with matters of immigration or documentation status. Matters of immigration and documentation must be handled by ICE or DHS, and this piece of legislation will ensure that there is no confusion regarding the roles of these agencies.

A misinterpretation of the Safe Communities Act is that it is will make Massachusetts a sanctuary state, but this is indeed not stated within the language of the bill. The federal government’s threat to revoke funding of sanctuary states does not apply to this bill, as it does not limit the government’s ability to enforce immigration. Instead, it only limits local law enforcement’s ability to engage with immigration enforcement. If a specific state were to adopt sanctuary policies, and therefore be at risk of losing funding, the state itself would have to directly impede the efforts of immigration enforcement. The Safe Communities Act does not limit federal immigration enforcement, but rather prohibits law enforcement from taking on responsibilities that they are not necessarily prepared to handle responsibly. This, therefore, would not put federal funding at risk.

As advocates, we are confident that the benefits associated with the Safe Communities Act do in fact outweigh any potential costs. The primary benefit of this piece of legislation is that communities will be able to trust that their law enforcement departments are placing the safety of all residents above all else and that their neighborhoods should be a safe space for everyone regardless of the state of their documentation. It is incredibly important to restore the trust between law enforcement and individual communities because this will cause individuals who face abuse and fear for their safety to rely on those who are meant to protect them. As community confidence in law enforcement increases, so does crime reporting, and this leads to a decrease in overall crime rates. This relationship is especially important for undocumented victims of domestic violence and sexual assault who are forced to live in constant fear of deportation when reporting their abuse. This bill will improve the quality of life of thousands of undocumented individuals in the state of Massachusetts and will allow underserved communities to access more community-based resources that they are currently too afraid to seek out.

The creation of bills protecting the safety of undocumented communities is not unique to the State of Massachusetts, and such policies have been adopted around the country. California, Connecticut, Colorado, and various cities across the United States have adopted similar policies that have created much needed standards of peace and trust. California’s passage of SB 54, or the California Values Act, in January of 2017, prohibited state police from automatically transferring detainees to federal immigration agencies, holding detainees beyond their release dates, and now ensures that law enforcement keep public spaces safe for everyone.
Governor Baker signed the 2018 Fiscal Year Budget, a $39.4 billion projection of state police spending. This is an incredible sum of money that could be solely directed towards ensuring the safety of all Massachusetts residents, regardless of access to documentation, with the help of the Safe Communities Act.

Without your support for this bill, this money will not be used to its full potential, and our state police will not be able to experience relief from the responsibility of needing to tackle issues of immigration. This bill will protect our neighbors, friends, and family members in the police force from needing to take on the roles of immigration enforcement that they are not prepared to handle, and this will also restore much needed peace within undocumented communities. We are asking that you support this legislation and any other policies that protect immigrant populations, because until the most marginalized individuals in our communities are able to live in peace, none of our communities will ever truly be safe.

Letter to the Legislator

My name is Shoshanah Weinreich and I, along with my colleague, Emilia Feldman, am a student at Brandeis University who resides in Waltham, Massachusetts. I am writing to respectfully request your support of the H.4603: An Act to Protect the Civil Rights and Safety of all Massachusetts Residents, also known as the Safe Communities Act. Governor Baker, and his executive administration, have publicly attempted to fight this legislation, with the introduction of bill H.3870, legislation that would allow law enforcement to honor written requests from ICE to hold specific individuals for twelve hours. In addition, the Baker administration currently oppose the compromise the lawmakers on this bill struck with police chiefs. The compromise bill says that police will be allowed to hold certain individuals at ICE’s request for up to six hours in custody, provided that the individual was convicted of a violent crime. When we met with you recently, you expressed to us that “our messaging needs to be clear,” and we believe this legislation is vital for the future of public safety in the state of Massachusetts.

Since January 2017, when President Trump assumed office, ICE arrests have more than tripled in New England alone. Almost ninety percent of immigrant arrests are not for previously committed crimes, but rather immigration violations. This practice is an accepted form of racism because the process of immigration arrests tends to be on the basis of racial-profiling. Non-criminal people are being targeted, people who make significant economic contributions to the community.

Senator Eldridge and Representative Matias’ legislation will ensure that the economic benefits immigrants bring will continue, hugely benefiting the state of Massachusetts. First, it opposes the creation of a registry that would track people for aspects of their identity, such as religion, race, or ethnic origin. Second, the act ensures that local and state police attend to their main job of fighting crime, not enforcing immigration. It does this by prohibiting law enforcement from collaborating with ICE, questioning non-citizens on their immigration statuses, and using state resources for the purpose of immigration enforcement. Finally, it secures due process rights for non-citizens. Because of this, the Safe Communities Act aims to safeguard all Massachusetts residents regardless of race or ethnic background. These are all measures to allow immigrants to be safer, and therefore able to pursue their full economic potential as Massachusetts residents.

We understand there may still be concerns regarding the lack of communication law enforcement will have with immigration enforcement. However, we know that, because of your position as the representative for Waltham, you are aware that Waltham has a large immigrant community who will be relying on this legislation to allow them to be comfortable in their own communities. Your constituents deserve to live their lives free of fear. We ask that you encourage your colleagues to sign onto this bill to protect the safety and well-being for all who live in this great state.

Excerpts from Campaign Journals

Emilia

Working on a piece of legislation that works to preserve the rights of immigrant communities in Massachusetts has been a very important experience for me and this course has offered me a window into the chaotic nature of immigration advocacy and reform in today’s political climate. This semester has been full of learning through making mistakes, talking to anyone who would listen, and learning to remain flexible with the ever evolving political climate. This has been a difficult process and the obstacles we have faced as students engaging with immigration advocacy are directly linked to the dwindling resources afforded to immigration advocacy groups and the very racist way in which our president engages with undocumented residents. The Safe Communities Act seemed like a very simple piece of legislation that could be adopted by the state of Massachusetts without the need for excessive funding or effort, but this bill still hit extremely detrimental roadblocks.
Since the bill was sent to study very early on, our roles as student advocates has been rather ambiguous. The largest problem we encountered during this process would be the lack of responses we have received from representatives, community-based organizations, and other advocacy groups. This is due to the very sensitive subject of immigration, the lack of funding given to important immigrant service organizations, and the general chaotic nature of immigration law under the Trump administration.

The individuals and organizations dedicated to fighting for immigrant rights have become so exhausted and their resources so thinly spread that they have not always been able to take time to engage with student advocates. This is a roadblock that we expected to experience but were able to cope with once we began increasing the number of individuals and organizations we reached out to. While not many people responded to our many emails or calls, we were able to connect with the co-sponsors of the bill, attend Massachusetts Communities Action Network (MCAN) events, and various other events on the Brandeis campus that helped us throughout the process.

Shoshanah

Meeting with bill co-sponsor Senator Jamie Eldridge

My role in this meeting was to present Senator Eldridge with the knowledge I had of advocacy coalitions’ beliefs on the new bill. Safe Communities, in order to get more support from law enforcement agencies, added a provision that said police would be allowed to hold certain individuals convicted of violent felonies, and also undocumented, for 6 hours if ICE requested they do so. This would undo the landmark decision the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court decided in August (Commonwealth v. Lunn) that said police would not be allowed to hold any individuals at ICE’s request. Many advocacy organizations did not support this new language, including MIRA. I wanted to bring that to Senator Eldridge because I believe that, as an advocate, it is my duty to let my legislators know of their constituents’ concerns. He was very appreciative that I brought that information to his attention however, he emphasized that some progress is better than no progress, especially under this president, who will, as Eldridge argues, stop at nothing to deport all undocumented immigrants. I also filmed footage of him for our video.

After speaking with both co-sponsors of the bill, I had the opportunity to do some reflection. Both of them noted how impressed they were with our passion, but Senator Eldridge, in particular, said of me that I was poised and confident, which, he said, was the most important skill at an advocate’s disposal. That was reassuring because I have not always had faith in advocacy throughout this semester, especially considering how difficult an environment for immigration advocacy it currently is, and hearing that my advocacy was strong, from a top legislator, was validating.

Update

As of February 5, 2018, the bill was sent to study.

For more information

View the bill:
malegislature.gov/Bills/190/SD1596

Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition
miracoalition.org
Extreme weather and higher temperatures are causing sea levels to rise and decreasing biodiversity on Earth. In 2015 alone, Massachusetts emitted 65.8 million metric tons of carbon dioxide with the electric power sector emitting 11.3 million metric tons. If we want to ensure a clean and safe future for generations to come, we need to take immediate action. In order to change these statistics in favor of the environment, we need to change our energy consumption patterns and switch to more sustainable sources. Bill H. 2700, as presented by Representative Kay Kahn, is part of the solution in creating a future for renewable energy by raising renewable portfolio standards. This bill would push the market towards renewable energy and in turn create more jobs, decrease carbon emissions, and set Massachusetts on the right path to meet the Global Warming Solutions Act.

**The Bill**

H.2700: *An Act to increase the renewable portfolio standard and ensure compliance with the Global Warming Solutions Act*

**Elevator Speech**

We are Gerrianna Cohen and Mia Dorris, and we are students at Brandeis University. Responsible planning ensures an economically competitive energy market and allows for the Commonwealth to protect the environment. We are at risk of increasing traumatic weather events, rising sea levels, and drastic climate change effects. Currently the electric sector emits 29% of the total greenhouse gases.

Increasing the Renewable Portfolio Standard is the best solution to mitigate these issues. The Renewable Portfolio Standard is the percentage of electricity that utilities and suppliers are required to use from renewable energy. By increasing the renewable portfolio standard from 1% to 2% or more will allow for a shift in market demand towards renewable energy and allow for complying with the Global Warming Solutions Act. This will help keep the Massachusetts energy market economically competitive, the environment clean and protect against the increasing force of climate change.

We urge you to vote Bill H. 2700 favorably out of the House Telecommunications, Utility, and Energy committee.
Excerpts from Storybook

Expert Testimony from Pat Knight, Synapse Energy:
"Throughout the country, RPS have sparked half of all growth in U.S. renewable energy generation and production. Massachusetts has to adjust their RPS by quite a bit to really make a difference."

Expert Testimony from Gary Dorris, CEO of Ascend Analytics: “The RPS sets a clear transition plan for Massachusetts to realize energy independence.”

Op-Ed

Mia

This past winter Massachusetts experienced four Nor’easters and serious flooding. It is clear Massachusetts is facing the effects of climate change, and these extreme weather events will only increase with time if no action is taken. Massachusetts prides itself on being a state that is ahead of the others. After all, Massachusetts was the first state to allow gay marriage and to pass minimum wage laws. Yet, Massachusetts is falling behind in one of the most prominent issues today: climate change.

Climate change is leading to extreme weather events, loss of consistent water and agriculture supplies, and many more adverse effects. Human emitted greenhouse gases have been shown to be the primary cause of climate change. In reducing climate change effects, establishing a renewable energy infrastructure is vital. Renewable portfolio standards (RPS) demand that utility and energy companies use a certain percentage of renewable energy as part of their overall energy supply. RPS would decrease carbon emissions which, in turn, would reduce climate change effects, thus, setting up Massachusetts for a more sustainable future.

When retiring nuclear plants serving the state, Massachusetts has a unique opportunity, because renewable energy can fill the expected energy gap. Currently, natural gas is acting as a substitute for nuclear energy in Massachusetts. However, during the long winter months, there is not enough natural gas pipeline capacity to maintain a dependable energy source. Increasing RPS would create a more reliable and secure energy grid. Also, natural gas contains 50% carbon, whereas renewable energy is 100% carbon free. RPS not only serves as an integral strategy to reduce emissions, it also can enhance energy grid reliability while paving the way to energy independence.

Bill H.2700 demands an increase in RPS from 1% to 2% each year. In the long run, this will allow for a gradual market shift towards a renewable energy future for Massachusetts. Since the 1990s, RPS has enhanced the economy while decreasing emissions. In order for Massachusetts to meet the goals instituted by law in the Global Warming Solutions Act, RPS must increase because the Commonwealth will fail to meet 2030 goals if no action is taken.

Instituting RPS not only yields a cleaner energy source, but also has economic benefits. Although some people believe that establishing a renewable energy infrastructure is more expensive, it will lead to over 37,000 more jobs by 2030. Establishing renewable sources such as solar farms and wind power will also lead to increases in tax revenue. An increase in RPS would lead to large reductions in emissions from the electric sector. Establishing a renewable infrastructure allows Massachusetts to have more energy independence, because the Commonwealth will not need to continue purchasing fuel from other states. Overall, this bill allows for a gradual economic transition towards a renewable infrastructure within the energy market, an important feature of the solution to creating a more sustainable future.

RPS would decrease air pollution and emissions, leading to cleaner air. Massachusetts’ data mirrors the national trend of high asthma rates. Air pollutants initiate asthma attacks, and also have been found to lead to adverse cardiovascular and respiratory effects. Therefore, reducing pollution by changing our energy sources to be cleaner and more sustainable has significant health benefits. As someone who suffers from asthma, I personally recognize the severe risks of poor air quality. The largest predictor of life expectancy is the state of the environment, which is defined as the air, water, occupation and where you live. In order to keep current and future generations healthy, the Commonwealth needs to be as clean and sustainable as possible. A step in this direction involves establishing a renewable energy structure through RPS to reduce emissions which, in turn, will lead to a cleaner environment. The savings in health benefits from reduced morbidity are estimated to be greater than electric costs.

By increasing RPS, monthly energy bills are expected to increase by 15 cents to $2 per month. Considering that the average energy bill is $80 to $100 per month, this increase is relatively small bearing in mind the ecological and economic benefits. However, in the long run electric bills will decrease. If the Commonwealth constituents and governance does not pay upfront costs now to create a renewable and sustainable future, then even more drastic costs and effects will be expected in the future. If we do not mitigate climate change quickly, significant consequences are predicted for current and future generations.

We have the power to act now to work towards environmental protection within our state by calling representatives on the Telecommunications, Utility and Energy Committee, and encouraging them to pass Bill H.2700.
House Ways and Means Script

Responsible planning ensures an economically viable energy future. As a former investment banker, you understand the importance of stability and the stability of energy costs for ratepayers. With the rise of fossil fuel and natural gas energy generation prices rising, shifting the market towards renewable energy ensures a stable, and economically viable future energy source.

Massachusetts can take a position on the world stage for taking proactive measures to decrease the effects of anthropogenic emissions. If aggressive measures are not taken soon to curb the effects of anthropogenic emissions, there will be significant consequences for the environment and on the economy. Greenhouse gases are emitted by human activity into the atmosphere, and since the 20th century have had a large impact on climate change. In 2015, it was found by the EPA that US electricity is the largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions at 29%.

In order to reduce emissions from the production of electricity, Massachusetts has adopted Renewable Portfolio Standards as the solution. Renewable portfolio standards mandate the percentage of renewable electricity generation that utilities and suppliers are required to use as a portion of their energy supply. Presently, the Massachusetts Renewable Portfolio Standard is 12% and is increasing at 1% per year. Under this existing legislation, the RPS will not achieve the goals of the Global Warming Solutions Act for 2030. We are advocating for Bill H. 2700, which increases the RPS to 2% to meet these goals and grow the renewable energy market.

Currently, Massachusetts cannot import enough natural gas in the winter to meet energy demands. Natural gas demand is increasing with the retirement of nuclear plants, which leads to volatile prices. Renewable energy is now economically competitive with fossil fuel generation due to advances in technology. Increasing the RPS will act as a hedge against the natural gas price increases, helping with the winter natural gas energy constraints, and help shift the market towards renewable energy yielding greater future energy independence and supply reliability.

The increase in renewable energy will allow for more tax revenue and jobs. Opponents of the bill argue that this will become a burden on lower income families and that the infrastructure needed to increase renewable energy in Massachusetts will be too expensive. However, as fossil fuels and natural become increasingly costlier and more to import and procure, renewable energy provides a stable energy source at a stable price. The average energy bill for a household is $80-$100/month, and the initial increase in electricity bills after implementing RPS ranges from 15 cents to $2/month. Over the course of ten years, the switch to renewables will add more than pay for itself. Even with the loss of jobs from shutting down nuclear power plants, this bill will add 37,000 jobs and decrease carbon emissions by 66 percent. Massachusetts is known to be a forward-thinking leader within the United States. Under present law, Massachusetts will fall behind the other 28 states who have passed aggressive Renewable Portfolio Standards. We must take action now.

Massachusetts now has a supply of renewable energy because of the RPS. The RPS also contributes to even more green energy production through the RECs (Renewable Energy Certificates). When a utility purchases a REC mandated by the standard, they are putting money into renewable energy. This gives the renewable energy market the revenue it needs to build more infrastructure and clean energy systems. Throughout the country, RPSs have sparked about half of all growth in U.S. renewable electricity generation and capacity and accounted for 44% of all U.S. REC capacity additions in 2016. This shows the impact that RPS has on increasing the renewable energy market. Fiscally, this enables revenue growth for the state government. The government itself does not have to invest in the energy, but it is setting up the necessary arrangements for a mutually beneficial system. Also, wind and solar farms property are worth more than nuclear and natural gas plants, therefore developing renewable infrastructure will generate more property tax revenue.

We are asking you as the Chair of the Ways and Means Committee to support renewable energy and increase the Renewable Portfolio Standard from 1 percent to 2 percent or more by voting Bill H. 2700 favorably out of committee.

Letter to the Legislator

My name is Gerriana Cohen, and along with my colleague Mia Dorris, we are students at Brandeis University and residents of Waltham. We are writing to you because we are concerned about the state’s ability to responsibly plan for a comfortable, affordable and clean future. As a real estate professional and a proponent of environmental issues, you should support Bill H. 2700 relating to Renewable Portfolio Standards. Climate change is substantially changing the world as we know it. As shown by the bills you have co-sponsored, you care about environmental issues, and we do not want to see Waltham impacted by climate change. If aggressive measures are not undertaken soon to curb the effects of anthropogenic emissions, temperature will continue to rise with consequences such as an increase in extreme weather events and significant human health risks from extreme weather events. In protecting Massachusetts against these substantial changes, strong efforts must be taken in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The electric sector makes up 29% of emissions. In order to decrease the electric sectors emissions, we must shift the market toward renewable energy. The Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) mandates the percentage of renewable electricity generation that utilities and suppliers

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The electric sector makes up 29% of emissions. In order to decrease the electric sectors emissions, we must shift the market toward renewable energy. The Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) mandates the percentage of renewable electricity generation that utilities and suppliers
are required to use as a portion of their energy supply. RPS helps address reducing carbon emissions in order to mitigate climate change effects. Currently, three nuclear plants in New England are retiring, and Massachusetts is using natural gas as a substitute. There is not enough natural gas pipeline capacity to achieve a dependable energy source especially during the winter months. In order to solve this, we are advocating for increasing the RPS from 1% to 2% or more, as put forth in Bill H.2700.

This bill would push the market towards renewable energy and in turn create more jobs, decrease carbon emissions, and set Massachusetts on the right path to meet the goals set by the Global Warming Solutions Act. Even with the loss of jobs from shutting down nuclear power plants, this bill will add 37,000 jobs and decrease carbon emissions by 66 percent. Compared with the 28 other states that have Renewable Portfolio Standards, Massachusetts is significantly behind.

Opponents of the bill argue that this will become a burden on lower income families and that the infrastructure needed to increase renewable energy in Massachusetts will be too expensive. However, as fossil fuels become increasingly rare and cost more and more to import and procure, renewable energy provides a stable energy source at a stable price. According to a Synapse Energy Report, this bill will only add 15 cents to $2 to the average monthly household bill. This is a small price to pay considering the average electricity bill is around $80-$100. We need this bill to ensure that we meet the goals of the Global Warming Solutions Act, which are necessary for a healthy and clean future. Finally, the bill will put money back into the system through the Renewable Energy Certificate System to fund the necessary infrastructure to add new energy procurement.

Representative Lawn, we ask you to speak to Representative Thomas Golden and other members of the Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy and urge them to vote the bill out of committee favorably.

### Excerpts from Campaign Journals

#### Gerrianna

**Attending an activist training session hosted by the Sierra Club**

The meeting started with Emily Norton providing an overview of the energy system and how the Renewable Portfolio Standard plays a role. Because this meeting was towards the beginning of the semester, it was a great introduction to the topic and a great way to see what the coalition was saying about RPS. Emily Norton is a constituent of Kay Khan, the representative who introduced the bill. Emily expressed her concerns to Representative Khan about carbon emissions and sees increasing the RPS as a good way to make an impact.

Representative Khan then was motivated to put forward the bill Mia and I followed. This shows how constituents can really make an impact in the legislative process.

One of the greatest things I learned in this meeting is that it is important to express your concerns to the people in power if you want something to be done about it. Emily Norton is on her city council and explained that even at the local level, she is most moved by people who come up to her and share their stories. She also mentioned that she sometimes looks up to see if that person voted previously or if they can vote in the next election. This was a wakeup call to me about how my vote really matters and representatives care about this.

#### Mia

**Meeting with Jacob Stern, Cleaner Energy Organizer at the Sierra Club**

Throughout the semester, Jacob has been a great resource and has been extremely helpful in our meetings with us. In meeting with Jacob, I realized how vital it is to look outside just the economic perspective of RPS. He discussed various selling points of the proposed bill, ranging from the health perspective to industry production, and also gave an historical context. Thus, Jacob helped me see how valuable it is to view an issue in a multifaceted manner because it is so important to understand how many different areas the bill could have an impact.

At the beginning of the semester, when talking to legislators, I didn't realize how broad the impact of policy can be, and how important it is to evaluate all the different areas that potentially affect various aspects of our lives. One of the key points was that I realized the importance of looking seriously at the health effects of not establishing Renewable Portfolio Standards and was surprised to find many important health effects to consider. Jacob also discussed how vital it is to understand the opposition in order to argue your point effectively, a point which expanded my viewpoint in how to fight for policy change.

#### Update

As of July 16, 2018, the bill has been ordered to study.

#### For more information

View the bill:
malegislature.gov/Bills/190/h2700

Sierra Club
sierraclub.org/massachusetts


Increasing Renewable Portfolio Standards

Diversifying energy resources

G. Amogha Rao ’18
Philip Szeszol ’19

Bill H.2700, proposed by Representative Kay Khan, attempts to materialize the goals set out in the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2008 through a regulatory framework based on Renewable Portfolio Standards (RPS). RPS requires energy service providers to source a certain portion of their energy from renewable energy markets, increasing acquisition on an annual basis. The two central goals of the RPS provisions are to diversify energy sources so as to reduce reliance on exhaustible sources of energy and secondly, to ensure that carbon emissions reach the 1990 baseline emission levels. The economic and fiscal implications of the bill are expected to bring not only thousands of new jobs to the economy but is also expected to expand the tax collection base.

■ The Bill

H.2700: An Act to increase the renewable portfolio standard and ensure compliance with the Global Warming Solutions Act

■ Elevator Speech

We are Phil and Amogha. We would like to talk to you about Renewable Portfolio Standards (RPS) as a means of achieving sound environmental stewardship in order to protect MA citizens from hazards associated with climate change. This is extremely important if we truly want to preserve our quality of life and that of future MA citizens.

Massachusetts is legally obliged to comply with the Global Warming Solutions Act – at this point in time however, these standards are not being observed by Massachusetts statutes. Through responsible, ecological, and sound energy practices, in the spirit of environmental justice, we must implement a policy to reduce our reliance on dirty energy and save at-risk Massachusetts citizens from numerous climate change threats. In fact, Boston is one of a few US cities that is considered to be at risk due to climate change.

Currently, Massachusetts is one of 29 states that mandates the annual increase of renewable energy sources through Renewable Portfolio Standards (RPS). However, instead of assuming a leadership position, Massachusetts is falling behind. The current annual increase in RPS
levels is not robust enough for Massachusetts to achieve its long-term renewable energy targets. The interim target year 2030 of achieving 25% RPS is itself becoming a difficult goal to achieve.

We must increase the annual RPS to an at least 2% increase per annum if we want to achieve a responsible policy-driven solution. By incentivizing suppliers to switch to renewable energy, the policy-driven rise in demand can bring efficiency gains in the form of higher competition, while driving down average costs and prices. By undertaking this policy, the Commonwealth will not only be compliant with the Global Warming Solutions Act but will also experience economic growth in terms of adding jobs and lowering energy production costs.

As a means of securing the future of the Commonwealth and preserving the integrity of our economy, is the Representative willing to support Bill H.2700 in furtherance of our obligation of environmental stewardship? 

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**Excerpt from Storybook**

*Expert Testimony from Mohit Dua, CEO and Founder of WindESCo, a firm that specializes in wind turbine optimization:*

Dua claims “as a result of stable policies, cost sharing essentially covers the price of wind turbines”, which essentially translates to a cost-effective and economically sustainable model. He further added, “Under current market conditions, offshore wind is becoming more and more competitive.”

Dua also stated, “State-based efforts in the U.S. exist in the shadow of federal policies.” Companies with substantive capital and ability to engage in large-scale renewable energy mainly qualify for federal tax rebates, excluding small-scale companies. Under current policies, companies do not have any incentive to adopt green energy, lowering our ability to find a viable solution.

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**Op-Ed**

Amogha

*Navigating Rising Waters and Troubled Times*

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has a mandate to reduce its reliance on carbon-based sources of energy. The mandate is implemented in the form of Renewable Portfolio Standards (RPS) and Renewable Fuel Standards (RFS). The RPS platform is used to target households and industries in their acquisition of clean energy. Within the energy market, suppliers are required to increase their acquisition of renewable sources of energy as a part of their overall portfolio at a rate of 1% on an annual basis. In other words, energy suppliers must reduce their reliance on carbon-based energy platforms at a rate of 1% per year as a part of their compliance to the RPS regulations. However, the issue is that the RPS mandate is too slow for a significant change or improvement to occur. MA coastal habitants have had to face loss of life, property and opportunity. In essence, MA is not fulfilling its constitutionally-guaranteed obligations to its citizens. Implementing the solution will only become harder as we let time pass by. In fact, the Global Warming Solutions Act (GWSA) prescribes that MA carbon emissions be reduced to 80% of 1990 base emission levels by 2050. Under the current mandate, this is not only impossible but is also extremely counterproductive as it allows for higher emission levels, which would require an even more costly transition process to clean energy. This is a major problem and it is a problem that is affecting all of us.

MA’s commitment to solving the problem and contributing towards a solution is significantly falling behind. The earth is the only home that humankind has ever known and it is the only home we will ever know for the reasonably distant future, and if there is any state that understands the principle of collective action for a systemically collective problem, it is MA. It is extremely saddening to see a state that would otherwise consider itself a pioneering moral force, is falling behind to the extent that it is becoming a part of the problem. In the larger scheme of things, MA’s contribution might appear to be insignificant but if history has shown us anything it is that the power of humanistic leadership has an appeal like no other. At the cost of appearing idealistic, I submit that the movement to legalize same-sex marriage is a clear-cut illustration of how the contribution of one state in one nation can impact the world in its outlook towards issues that affect society and its sense of common humanity.

If MA opens its doors to market-based or semi-market-based solutions to climate change, this change can become a success story, inspiring other sister-states to join in. The Northeast region is one of the richest and most influential regions in the United States. This region through MA leadership has the intellectual capacity as well as the practical tolls to lead the way in finding a solution that can be replicated across jurisdictions and nations. The RPS regulatory platform is definitely one of those tools that have shown significant signs of success. From an economic and political perspective, the RPS mandate in MA has been unanimously endorsed across the political spectrum with minor reservations on implementation procedures. This non-partisan approach is essential if we want to use existing political frameworks and economic infrastructure in searching for a cohesive solution that does not undermine either our democratic federalism or our robust economic institutions. The deadlock that we see
Bill proposes two policy amendments. The first, accelerate the State budget and two, larger economy-wide impact. The broken down into two principal categories – one, impact on implementation, which, you, as a former Financial Advisor, proposed Bill meets the practical requirements of policy because we want to impress upon this committee that the Clean Energy Council (NECEC). We mention this explicitly and agencies such as the Sierra Group and the Northeast fiscal model, as demonstrated by numerous organizations H.2700 be understood under the rubric of a sustainable ensuring economic viability and stimulating the renewable technologies, we understand that you have an appreciation for Joint Committee on Economic Development and Emerging legislator who has previously served as the Vice-Chair of the impacts of climate change on Massachusetts citizens. As a –to support these policies as a means of preserving their own way of life as well as securing the future of their children and other future citizens. History may remember Boston for its democratic fight against taxation without representation and its contribution to the American revolution, it may also credit MA to be the pioneering force behind the legalization of same-sex marriage, and therefore, it would be the greatest travesty if history records MA for its inaction against the greatest threat to humankind.

**House Ways and Means Script**

Mr. Chairman, under the current regulations, Massachusetts is falling behind in its commitment to reverse the adverse impacts of climate change on Massachusetts citizens. As a legislator who has previously served as the Vice-Chair of the Joint Committee on Economic Development and Emerging Technologies, we understand that you have an appreciation for policies that incentivize the growth of emerging technologies under an economic model that is viable. In the spirit of ensuring economic viability and stimulating the renewable energy industry, we urge that the policies outlined in Bill H.2700 be understood under the rubric of a sustainable fiscal model, as demonstrated by numerous organizations and agencies such as the Sierra Group and the Northeast Clean Energy Council (NECEC). We mention this explicitly because we want to impress upon this committee that the proposed Bill meets the practical requirements of policy implementation, which, you, as a former Financial Advisor, can validate easily from our following submissions.

The fiscal and budgetary implications of the policy can be broken down into two principal categories – one, impact on the State budget and two, larger economy-wide impact. The Bill proposes two policy amendments. The first, accelerate RPS compliance to 2% per annum, and second, revoke the exemption granted to Municipal Light Plants (MLPs) that allow MLPs to function outside the RPS compliance framework.

The Bill does not require any additional infrastructural investment such as administrative frameworks and additional regulatory agencies because these provisions already exist. There might be a marginal increase in the budgeted expenditure due to the addition of interim targets and “phase-in” compliance requirements, which might require more staff personnel. However, even this marginal hiring expense can be offset by an imminent increase in the tax base itself. An analysis done by the NECEC, predicts that the policy would create at least 24,000 new jobs, which from a budgetary perspective, increases the tax base, increasing the inflow of tax revenue.

Further, while it is true that some of the new jobs might be offset by layoffs in the non-renewable energy market, the gradual nature of the RPS regimen allows for the labor markets to clear through the help of skill development and vocational assistance programs. From the labor market’s perspective, the absorption of former workers from old inefficient industries to new green industries is a positive outcome because it incentivizes efficient allocation of capital and labor resources. While the immediate job market related benefits are calculable, the long-term RPS related benefits include the development of upstream and downstream industries that will add more jobs to the economy.

From the perspective of the final consumer, the energy related costs are estimated to rise by a marginal figure ranging from 15 cents to $2 a month per person, on average, as per a Sierra Club financial simulation. An alternate simulation conducted by NECEC claims that the policy will bring price stability and cost predictability to the otherwise highly volatile natural gas-based energy market, ensuring at least an annual 1.3% fall in wholesale energy prices.

While many economists advocate for a market based solution to climate change along the lines of setting quotas and selling pollution permits, the legislation in question calls for a legislative or a regulatory approach to climate change and emission control. Some of the concerns associated with a regulatory approach are in the form of economic objections. By stipulating an increase in renewable sources of energy consumption, the state is essentially creating an artificial demand for a commodity that would otherwise be less competitive in a free market. Therefore, the objection is based on an unfair business practice and unfair government intervention logic. However, the counter can also be found in the economic logic of protecting an infant industry if it can become competitive at a later point, especially when such industries obviate the negative externality of pollution and
carbon emissions. According to industry experts like Mohit Dua, CEO and Founder of WindESCo, and Kevin Lindemer, MD of IHS Markit, offshore wind farming is an excellent example of green energy becoming naturally competitive with carbon-based energy markets. The last few years have witnessed a dramatic fall in offshore wind energy production costs, making end-user and wholesale prices within the competitive range of carbon-based energy industries.

Another popular reservation to the policy expressed in the bill comes in the form of lowered real estate valuation. Many land-property investors and owners have expressed concern over loss of value due to proximity to large-scale green energy plants. While this concern will remain somewhat unmitigated in the short-run, in the long-run we can expect consumer preferences and expectations to change with time, allowing for the markets to stabilize obviating preference-based undervaluation.

Mr. Chairman, as a former investment banker and financial advisor yourself, we hope that you take these facts and figures into consideration before deliberating over the fiscal and economic viability of the said policies. It is our sincerest belief that these policies not only reconcile the numerous reservations that the opposition might have but also benefit the economy of the Commonwealth immensely, all at the cost of what the Commonwealth is already allocating for the RPS framework to be operational. Given the level of research and analysis that has already been done on the subject, we urge you to support this bill throughout its legislative life, especially by voting it out favorably under the aegis of this committee.

**Letter to the Legislator**

It has come to our attention that Massachusetts has been lagging in its commitment to the standards laid out in the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2008. More specifically, the Commonwealth finds itself in a weak position relative to neighboring states in its efforts to increase implementation of renewable energy sources. Through our analysis, we have found that current statutory regulations are not incentivizing growth in the renewable energy industry at the foundational level. We believe that this puts our state at risk of taking a ‘too little-too late’ approach to committing to clean energy sources – an issue that could bring dire ecological and fiscal implications for the future. If left unaddressed, we risk the health of our economy, in terms of productivity, efficiency and output, in addition to potential loss in the form of life and property. While it is obvious that a high reliance on carbon-based sources of energy jeopardizes the quality of life for future generations, given the current trends, our generation appears to be sharing the same plight.

We are aware that you have a background in the real estate market and therefore, like you, we too have an appreciation for how policy change can impact the economy. Given the current, market conditions, it is becoming increasingly clear that climate change will affect the economy adversely, if environmental regulations remain unamended. Sectors like the real estate markets are also expected to face the brunt of climate change due to factors such as higher sea-levels and lower demand for coastal assets.

Bill H.2700 addresses this issue by proposing an increase in the acceleration of Renewable Portfolio Standards (RPS) from an annual 1% to 2%. This will decrease the rate of environmental pollution but also an assortment of economic benefits. Namely, analyses by the Northeast Clean Energy Council (NCEC) project that the implementation of this increase in RPS can directly lead to job creation, decrease in wholesale energy prices, and reduce carbon emissions to a third of current levels. The diversification of energy sources in Massachusetts can further stabilize price points for consumers by reducing dependence on natural gas, a demonstrably volatile market responsible for high energy prices in Massachusetts.

As the combined risks of higher energy prices for citizens and the consequence of carbon-emitting practices continue to rise year by year, public outcry is understandably collecting more momentum by the day in response. It has become undeniably clear that a measure must be implemented in order to strike a balance between the demand for energy and the necessity for a cleaner future. Our support of Bill H.2700 is but one voice among many that call for the Massachusetts legislature to deeply consider the adoption of this bill as a viable solution to the problems associated with the current trajectory of energy reliance demands in their current condition in the state. As our Representative, it is our sincerest hope that our interest and seriousness expressed in the matter will find the highest support and the most adequate representation under the aegis of your office. We hope that you will contribute towards the successful passage of Bill H.2700 and help in garnering support amongst your peers at the State House, especially members of the Telecommunications, Utilities and Electricity Committee.

**Excerpts from Campaign Journals**

**Philip**

Our meetings directly with the sponsor of Bill H.2700, Representative Kay Khan, provided us the baseline understanding of not only what the bill constituted, but why in fact such a legislation was proposed in the first place. As a resident of Newton, Representative Khan had worked closely with the locally based Sierra Club – an activist organization
directly involved with the research and formulation of arguments for the necessity of renewable energy sources in Massachusetts.

As directed by Representative Khan, we attended a panel discussion hosted by the Sierra Club explaining key points on the issue as well as the proposed solution through the introduction of the bill. Though it was surprising not to see the Representative present at the meeting, we were considerably shocked at her own knowledge of the issue, delving into some of the more robustly ancillary aspects of the problems surrounding a lack of mandated renewable energy implementation. It was through these discussions that we were able to compile our own understandings of the issue and truly appreciate the necessity of the bill's passage – a critical perspective we were able to take into our further meetings with other important legislators that held the fate of the bill within their decision for its future.

Amogha

*Meeting with Representative Randy Hunt*

Rep. Hunt invited us to discuss his approach to Bill H.2700. Rep. Hunt was somewhat skeptical towards the idea of accelerating the RPS to 3%. He preferred a more moderate approach of allowing businesses and other industry stakeholders to adopt green energy according to their own business models. He preferred this approach because he did not want Massachusetts to lose its competitiveness as an investment destination. As a person of finance and former financial officer at various Massachusetts businesses, he had a good understanding of how businesses perceive strict mandate based regulations. He was more concerned about the potential economic losses associated with faster acceleration than adoption of green energy itself. In all fairness, he definitely did have a point when he expressed concern over non-compliance and potential capital investment flight from Massachusetts.

Rep. Hunt did not oppose the policy on principle but was averse to heavy-handed initiatives. He expressed his reservations in the form of supporting the RPS bills with the caveat of making it practical for businesses to adopt green technology on their own terms as opposed to state-intervention in artificially influencing business models. This interaction brought to the forefront the issue of short-term cost and long-term benefit. The debate between these two trade-offs was central to understanding the larger issue of why there is still some friction in adopting green energy policies across the country.

**Updates**

As of July 16, 2018, the bill had been ordered to study.

For more information

View the bill:
mallegislature.gov/Bills/190/h2700

Sierra Club
sierraclub.org/massachusetts
Bill S.2296, An Act to protect access to confidential healthcare (PATCH Act), aims to strengthen the autonomy of people who are under someone else’s health insurance plan when they seek medical services. While the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) protects patient information from unwanted viewers, there is still a loophole left. Explanation of Benefits (EOB) are payment summaries of a patient’s visit to a healthcare provider. These summaries are automatically sent to the insurance policy subscriber that is listed in the patient’s health records. If the patient is a dependent of the subscriber, or if there are multiple people on the insurance plan, the information from the visit will be automatically disclosed to those members. While primary subscribers cannot call the facility about what type of care was received by the patient, the sensitive information is still explicitly disclosed in these EOB summaries. Minors, young adults, and anyone who is a dependent on someone’s health insurance plan are impacted by EOBs.

**The Bill**

S.2296: An Act to protect access to confidential healthcare

**Elevator Speech**

We are Brandon Ferrier and Erika Carter, students at Brandeis University. Only through responsible planning and common good will we improve protection of confidentiality in health care access. We are very concerned that 7 percent of teens and young adults said they would not seek care due to lack of confidentiality. This roughly amounts to over 300 million teens and young adults between the ages of 14 and 26 in the U.S. who are not seeking sensitive health services. This represents a major public health issue if people don’t feel safe seeking the care that they need. The 7 percent of teens that forgo care through their insurance may end up having to pay the out of pocket costs for services that can be covered by their insurance. And if the costs happen to be too great, they forgo care altogether.
This presents a major concern to themselves, and to a collective public health level as they will turn to safety net providers which are already stretched thin as it is. Most individuals who seek healthcare services want to know that what is said between them and their doctor remains confidential. Current HIPAA regulations make sure that what is meant to be confidential (insurance information, medication and prescriptions) is kept that way. But the same information from sensitive services like mental health, reproductive, and sexual health have the potential to have their confidential nature compromised when Explanations of Benefits are sent to other people on an insurance policy rather than the patient.

The passing of this bill will bring about a restored trust in the doctor patient relationship, and will give patients more oversight over the types of care they would continue to receive through their insurance. This safety that confidentiality isn't breached will give a patient a better peace of mind when they want to have conversations with their families.

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**Excerpt from Storybooks**

Expert testimony from Jason Badoo, pharmacy technician: “I’ve had a few instances in which younger patients (under the age of 26), who were still adults, pay full price for certain drugs as a means of not having their parents billed for the service, just so they could keep their personal medical health confidential. It was very startling because some items were definitely fully covered under insurance but cost $100+ out of pocket.”

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**Op-Ed**

**Erika**

All residents in the state of Massachusetts should have the opportunity to make their own confidential choices and decisions in regards to their health services. Many health insurers unconsciously violate their basic right of privacy of dependents who are under the same health plan as a family member or spouse. As a result of this, dependent patients such as minors or spouses are left paying out of pocket for sensitive medical services or not seeking necessary medical services at all.

For many patients, this is both a dangerous and devastating experience. Imagine a patient going to the doctor as a minor or an abused spouse for treatment services and two weeks later, their explanation of benefits is sent home to primary insurance holder whom they don't wish to disclose their medical services to. Or, think about a minor who is in need of an STI treatment but is too afraid of seeking treatment because of a fear of their medical services being disclosed to the primary policy holder who happens to be their parent. For some people, there is a good enough relationship where the dependent and the policyholder are comfortable enough to share health and medical information.

Unfortunately, not all people have a relationship with their parents or spouse where they can discuss medical health. Many patients, young and old struggle with making health decisions that will result in disclosing sensitive health service information. At what point is patient confidentiality protected? It’s protected in the doctor’s office, yet outside of that space, billing and explanation of benefits reveal all of their sensitive medical services that patients didn't want the primary insurance holder to be aware of. This lack of privacy essentially violates a basic right and has created a hole in protecting access to confidential health care through insurers. Without filling this void, confidentiality in the doctor’s office means nothing.

Over 300 million teens and young adults between the ages of 14 and 26 in the U.S. are not seeking sensitive health services. This represents a major public health issue if people do not feel safe seeking the care that they need due to lack of confidentiality. The 7 percent of teens that forgo care through their insurance may end up having to pay the out of pocket costs for services that can be covered by their insurance. And if the costs happen to be too great, they forgo care completely. This presents a major concern to themselves, and on a public health level because they will make use of free public care. Free clinics and public hospital resources are already limited. Fortunately, many coalitions and concerned patients have been working tirelessly to encourage legislators to recognize the extent of which people are affected by breach of contracts with medical service information.

Few states have laws that protect patient access to confidential health care, but many have to fill the hole that exists in protecting all patients. Fortunately, as of March 30th, legislators officially signed the PATCH Act in the state of Massachusetts, providing health insurance dependents access to confidentiality. The passing of this bill means insurers now have to implement a plan for educating insurance providers and holders of the rights of members and the responsibilities of carriers. Additionally, health insurance providers now have to comply with the new law which states that payment summaries and explanation of benefits for each specific service are to be sent separately to each individual under an insurance plan. As a supporter of this legislation, with great confidence, it is my belief that this legislation will provide the best privacy protections for the people of the Commonwealth than ever before. This legislation now specifically protects all patients regardless of their relationship with the policyholder. Health services tend to be sensitive in a variety of ways and it is imperative that this legislation continues to protect and respect the people of Massachusetts.
House Ways and Means Script

My name is Erika Carter and I, along with my colleague Brandon Ferrier are students of Brandeis University and residents of the city of Waltham. I’m writing you because I am concerned about the ways in which descriptions of patient Explanation of Benefits (EOBs) is so easily accessible to parents or spouse of dependents. It takes a major toll on dependents as it prevents people who are under their spouse or parent’s health insurance plan by forcing dependents to pay high of pocket costs for sensitive medical services due to lack of confidentiality. It also puts patients in dangerous predicaments where they are refusing to forgo the care they need. This is why I am writing to ask for your support with Senate Bill 2296, An Act to protect access to confidential health care (PATCH).

Part of the bill proposes that EOBs would consist of generalized descriptions and information regarding the medical services received by the patient. These EOBs would be made available to patients through an alternative address and/or via email, essentially saving costs for insurance carriers communications process. This bill has the potential to clear up the patches in respect to improving patient confidentiality. Currently, there are thirteen states with preparations that serve to protect the confidentiality of individuals insured as dependents. Two of those states, New York and Wisconsin have specific protections in place specific to the distribution of EOBs. Nearly a quarter of U.S. states taking preventative measures to ensure protection of confidentiality for dependents under their parent’s or spouse’s insurance plan. In the near future, I do not foresee this being a financial burden in any way as it will simply allow carriers to adjust their communications.

Representative Stanley, I beseech you to speak with the chair and members of the Committee on Health Care Finance and ask them to make this bill a priority and vote it out of committee favorably as it will assist in improving health care access for residents across the state. Thank you.

Letter to the Legislator

I am writing you because I am concerned about the disturbing effects regarding the lack of patient protection for insured dependents in the state of Massachusetts. In the state of Massachusetts, patients who are dependents on a spouse or parent’s health insurance are not guaranteed access to confidential health care. I truly value the welfare of all people and I believe that we can continue to protect all members of our community by taking preventative measures to ensure protection of patient confidentiality. A recent analysis of the National Survey of Family Growth 2013-2015, reported that 18% of respondents ages 15-17 and 9% those 18-25 would forgo medical services if one or more of their parents could find out about their health visit. Of those respondents with private health insurance, 22% said they would forgo services compared to the 12% of those with Medicaid. These numbers are very concerning because they suggest that a percentage of young adults are not seeking necessary medical services, thus putting themselves in harm’s way.

The Affordable Care Act allows young adults to stay on their parents’ health insurance until age 26. This great opportunity can create additional barriers, preventing young adults from obtaining treatment for sensitive services that they would not wish to disclose to their families. On the other hand, it is reasonable for parents or spouses of these dependents to be concerned about not knowing of the medical services being sought out, but it is important to respect and value the privacy of all people. Sometimes medical attention entails very personal services which causes risk of harm and/or stigma if Explanations of Benefits are not kept confidential.

I would like to thank you for your efforts in the passing of Bill S.2296. An Act to protect access to confidential health care (PATCH) on February 28th. This bill will give patients the opportunity to receive EOBs via email, at an alternate address, requiring insurers to use generic information about the services provided on EOBs rather than using more explicit descriptions of services.

Senator Barrett, as your constituent, I ask that moving forward, you do all you can to make PATCH a priority in an effort to provide our community with the ability to receive the care they need safely and confidentially. Thank you in advance for your time and consideration on this matter.

Excerpts from Campaign Journals

Erika

Meeting with Jacob Mueller, Senator Mike Barrett’s legislative aide

On February 28th, we met with Jacob Mueller before the hearing that took place that same day. In this meeting we discussed why we cared about the bill, and we explained how we were concerned about our peers who shared their concerns with us about their lack of confidentiality with health care on campus. We were also able to ask Jacob a few questions about why the bill struggled to get passed back in 2015 when it was a newly proposed bill. It was very helpful to understand why the bill was not favored before because it helped me to understand how the bill evolved in the past three years. Understanding the concerns of the opposing sides of the bill helped me to fill in some of the gaps that were a little unclear when first learning about the bill.
Brandon

Our professor and the students who previously worked on the bill in 2015 pointed us to several coalition groups we could get into contact with. The PATCH Alliance is a sub-group within Healthcare for All that directly deals with advocating for the bill. Other notable organizations within the support for the bill that we were pointed to included NARAL, and Planned Parenthood. Erika and I were able to get into contact with the PATCH Alliance’s head Alyssa Vangeli and tried to schedule a chance to meet in person, but our availability came into conflict with her day-to-day scheduling so we maintained correspondence about the bill’s progress through email threads. Our lobbying process taught me to not become discouraged when there is an obstacle.

Update

As of March 30, 2018, the bill has been passed and signed by the governor into Chapter 63 of the Acts of 2018.

For more information

View the bill:
malegislature.gov/Bills/190/S2296

PATCH Alliance
hcfama.org/coalition/patch-alliance-confidentiality-protection
Bill S.2203/H.632, or An Act relative to sexual violence on higher education campuses, seeks to combat issues surrounding the ways in which reported cases of sexual violence are resolved on college campuses. The bill advocates for improvements in preventative services and an increase in informing people at college campuses, including faculty, students, and public safety officials about sexual violence statistics and what the process might look like in the event that they themselves or someone they know experiences sexual violence. In order keep up with the latest preventive measures and prevention services, this bill also outlines the importance of disclosing new resources available on campuses. The legislature invokes a standard of treatment similar to that which is found in off campus, making prevention education and methods of reporting concrete and mandatory.

The Bill
S.2203/H.632: An Act relative to sexual violence on higher education campuses

Elevator Speech
College students deserve the opportunity to learn in a safe environment. We’re Victoria Fils-Aime and Kayla Kurland-Davis, students at Brandeis University. As women of color in our community, we are concerned about our safety at school. Women between the ages 16 and 25 are at the highest risk of experiencing sexual violence with 1 in 5 women and 1 in 16 men experiencing sexually assault on college campuses. S.2203, An Act relative to sexual violence on higher education campuses, requires schools to provide bystander training, treatment options and preventative education. This bill would provide additional preventative measures such as preventative education, and mandatory bystander trainings for staff and students on higher education campus. The bill would also provide support, for victims through better means of receiving appropriate treatment. We ask you to vote Bill S.2203 out of committee.

Excerpts from Storybook
Expert Testimony from Betty Reilly, Assistant Director of Public Safety: “I agree this bill is important and
feasible for Brandeis to take on. I think that many of these preventative measures are already in place here on the Brandeis campus, but I think it would be a good idea [as the bill states] to have some kind of annual training of the faculty and staff on campus, especially my team who works down here at public safety.”

Expert Testimony from Krista Giuntoli, Engagement Coordinator for One Love Foundation: “I do a lot of work with informing students and individuals about the prevention of dating violence…. This bill is extremely important and will help bring awareness to a problem of sexual violence that impacts 1 in every 5 women and 1 in every 16 men.”

**Op-Ed**

**Kayla**

As I walk through campus, and eavesdrop on big tours walking around learning about Brandeis from their trained tour guide I always wonder what is not being said. They always mention the blue light, and “if you stand in one spot anywhere on campus and turn 360 degrees you can see blue help light.” I know the blue light will not stop someone from catcalling me when I walk back to my dorm, I know a blue light will not come in handy if I am touched inappropriately in a dining room, or peeped on while I am showering. So what are they really for, if not to protect me? And so what if I see one, what are the chances I will actually go over and push the button, what are the chances I will want to talk to whoever picks up on the other end and explain the details of what had just happened to me? What are my options if I do say something, what are they if I don’t – why is it so complicated, why does being safe feel like a chore? Every minute at least one American is sexually assaulted. It could be a touch. It could be comment. An ill-intentioned moment. One that could change a life. Sexual assault happens all around us. On college campuses, one in five women and one in eighteen men have been victims of this violence. The problem here, is that not enough is being done on higher education campuses and it seems as though the institutions themselves do not care for their students enough to ensure a safe learning environment for them. Getting an education in a safe environment should be a right, not a privilege. The question we must ask ourselves now is; do victims of sexual assault deserve the same safeguards and response regardless of where the assault happens and who perpetrates the assault? What is the well-being and safety of these students worth, and who will hear them, and who will act on it? Bill S.2203: An Act relative to sexual violence on higher education campuses, demands that Massachusetts holds its institutions accountable to report incidents, to protect individuals, and educate its students about sexual assault – because no one wants to be a victim of sexual violence. The bill lays out clear and concise protocols that institutions will abide by before, during, and following a report of sexual violence on a college campus. Faculty, staff, and students are required to partake in what the bill refers to “preventative education” which includes informative session about consent, as well as programs such as bystander training. The bill also demands that institutions do a thorough investigation when sexual violence reports have been filed as well as create accessible, reliable treatment options for its victims. It should not even be a question of cost versus benefits, because everyone can benefit and money should never be more important than the well-being of students.

**House Ways and Means Script**

Safety should not be a privilege – it is a right. One in every 5 women and 1 in every 16 men experience sexual violence on higher education campuses. There need to be preventative measures in place to protect students from being harmed in school environments. By passing this bill you are able to support affected students who may feel lost and not know how to approach being a victim of sexual violence. As for fiscal implications, according to the Senate Ways and Means bill summary, the total cost of this legislation is estimated to be $1,000,000. Schools already receive federal funding to protect students from sexual violence, per 2014 Title IX guidelines. Overall, S.2203/H.632 would require minimal resources from both the state government and from colleges and universities. The bill takes advantage of existing infrastructure to improve sexual assault prevention and resources at institutions of higher education without requiring that schools build these resources from the ground up.

**Letter to the Legislator**

Safety should not be a privilege. Providing a safe learning environment for students is a value that I and many others share. I am aware that finding the means to support, and provide the appropriate services outlined in the bill is often a point of wariness – but I ask you to consider how students are being harmed without these preventative measures in place. At what point does the safety of students outweigh the cost of the expenses to improve my life and the lives of others. As students at Brandeis University, which is in your district, we need your help to ensure we are getting an education in a safe environment. We ask you to heed the concerns college students in your district have voiced, in advocating for creating safer education environments.

I ask myself every night: Who am I? Who do I want to be? What is my purpose? What am I meant to do in the world? I
am not the average college kid. The path that has led me to where I am today has been filled with adversity, uncertainty, and, ironically, hope. Through determination and much appreciated help from my mentors, I have overcome many obstacles.

You can't choose your beginnings, but you can choose your future, and as Oprah Winfrey said, “Where there is no struggle, there is no strength.” The struggles I have endured have only made me stronger. When I ask myself, who am I? I remember who I am: a young, strong, black woman who has overcome all obstacles that have been set in front of me. I know who I am, and I know what I want out of life.

Brandeis University has had a huge impact on my life in terms of achieving success and finding my self-worth. I want to make the world a better place and help others, like those who helped me to get there. I have earned the right to feel safe at Brandeis University and get a college education. My industry, ingenuity, and character have proven myself worthy. I ask you to please take the time to support bill S.2203 and help other students who also want to feel safe at their college campus. I could not thank you enough for taking the time to support the bill.

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**Excerpts from Campaign Journals**

**Kayla**

*Meeting with Sarah Berg, Director of Sexual Assault Services and Prevention at Brandeis*

Meeting with Sarah became a weekly occurrence as the class continued and as the bill gained more momentum. We initially just spoke to her about the bill and what her thoughts were having been someone to help and work with survivors of sexual violence, and generally her knowledge. She continuously emphasized how important this bill would be, but she also mentioned that many students do not actually know their rights, or who to go to in the event that they experience sexual violence.

Although the Rape Crisis Center is there and accessible and open to anyone and everyone who needs the services, many students don't really know how to navigate reporting a problem and seeking help. Sarah also became a pivotal figure for us playing a huge role in helping us put on a screening of the Hunting Ground, a film that the Coalition suggested we screen as part of the discussion of the bill as it pertains, and features Brandeis University. She too became a great sounding board for us as this class, progressed. Her expertise was very helpful when it came to nailing down the statistics, and the protocols that are currently in place at Brandeis and how sexual violence claims are reported, and the disciplinary actions that follow.

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**Victoria**

*Meeting with Jacob Edelman, Brandeis University Student Union President and previous student advocate for the bill*

Kayla and I reached out to Jacob expressing our passion for the bill, and he was very enthusiastic about meeting with us. This same enthusiasm was present when we met him in person. Jacob had worked on this bill when he was taken this same exact course and also worked in Representative Farley-Bouvier's office. Before starting our journey, I wanted to I learn the reasons why the legislation has not passed prior times in order for us to take a different approach this time around.

According to Jacob, one of the biggest challenges for representatives is worrying about how to sell the legislation to their constituents who were already having a hard time putting their children through college. We asked Jacob for tips on successful advocacy tactics. He said that promoting stories of successful cases from other states would be a good strategy. In addition, gathering personal narratives and bringing those individuals to the representatives and senators and to the hearings to testify at the hearing would evoke emotion and be powerful. Also, according to Jacob, there a lag time after the hearing and before voting, which is one of the most crucial times because representatives and senators need to constantly be reminded and pushed to vote for the legislation from their constituents.

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**Updates**

As of November 6, 2017, the bill has been read and referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means.

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**For more information**

View the bill: malegislature.gov/Bills/190/S2203

Every Voice everyvoicema.org
Ensuring Accurate and Comprehensive Sexual Education

Implementing standard sexual education in Massachusetts

Sivan Ben-Hayun ’19
Anne Lieber ’18

An Act relative to healthy youth addresses the issue of a lack of medically accurate, comprehensive, and age appropriate sexual education in Massachusetts by setting a standard curriculum that all schools that offer sexual education must follow. The curriculum would address topics like pregnancy and STD prevention, communication, and healthy relationships. Even in schools that provide sexual education, often students do not have the resources and information they need.

Bill
S.2113/H.3704: An Act relative to healthy youth

Elevator Speech
We are concerned that young people, like us just a few years ago, are not being provided with the tools they need to best prepare themselves for the future. Massachusetts students are not guaranteed the information and resources they need to make healthy choices. One in five teen girls in Massachusetts public schools have experienced sexual violence. Chlamydia cases in the state have gone up 60% in the last decade. Sexual violence and STDs can have lifelong impacts on people’s mental and physical health. Considering that only 41% of teens reported even talking about sex with their parents, schools present us with a perfect opportunity to combat these issues.

Comprehensive, medically accurate, age appropriate sex ed. is a key way to provide resources and the skills for healthy decision making to young people, for the common good of our community. That is why we are urging you to vote ‘yes’ on An Act relative to healthy youth. Thank you for your time.

Excerpt from the Storybook
Expert testimony from Samantha Grosser, sexual education instructor:
“If you don’t understand the risks, your decisions are not going to be as informed...you could have higher rates of STDs, pregnancy...In this era of ‘me too’, everyone has a story. Consent is about understanding and empathy at the end of the day. If you don’t have comprehensive sexual education, there’s no opportunity to ask, learn.”

Op-Ed
Sivan
Title IX used to be about sports teams. In 2018, we know it’s about more than sports teams. The Obama administration rightfully expanded its use to include protections for survivors of sexual violence. Students who have experienced sexual violence do not have...
the same opportunity to access education. This is gender discrimination.

As a country, we have begun to make progress towards eradicating gender discrimination in higher educational settings. Yet, unintended youth pregnancies are a major cause of gendered inequitable access to education and is continuously ignored by our policy makers and school administrators. It is now common practice for institutions of higher education to have Title IX officers to investigate cases and support survivors. But, in Massachusetts, our institutions of lower and secondary education have yet to make that investment in our young girls. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, over 83% of pregnant high school students in Massachusetts will drop out. This is a barrier to equal education for all.

MYTH: If you get pregnant and want to stay in school, stay in school. Or get an abortion, both are options.

Imagine being fifteen and living in a low-income neighborhood. You have all the stress that comes with being poor, fifteen and in high school. Now, you have learned that you are pregnant. Your family does not have the funds to support another child. Your pregnancy likely means you have to get a [/another] job. You have become a topic of gossip. You are considering an abortion, but there is limited access to clinics in your neighborhood, and it would cause gossip and shame onto your family unit. In the meanwhile, stress is becoming overburdening. You cannot focus in class anymore because your mind is elsewhere. Your grades begin to slip. This adds more stress. Eventually, the mental stress in addition to the physical tire of attending school and working becomes too much to handle. You make the difficult choice to drop out. You know that “just staying in school” or “just getting an abortion” are not as simple as they sound.

MYTH: You made the choice to have sex. This is your own doing. You deal with the consequences. Schools do not need to be involved.

No one gets pregnant on their own, yet pregnant young women are the only ones paying the cost of their education. Young men who impregnate by and large stay in school. Much of the research done on pregnancy related drop-out rates doesn’t even include men who impregnate because of how unaffected they are. This is gender discrimination.

This is why we need comprehensive, medically accurate, age appropriate sexual education in Massachusetts. The studies are irrefutable. We have known for decades what the research continues to show us: comprehensive, medically accurate, age appropriate sexual education is most successful in delaying sexual activity, and ensuring that young people make healthy choices when they do choose to be sexually active. It results in lower rates of pregnancy and STDs. It’s not enough to just have sex ed. It must be medically accurate and comprehensive. Abstinence only sexual education programing has been proven to be as ineffective as no sexual education whatsoever.

We need to be equipping our young people with the tools necessary to make healthy choices. If and when we don’t, young women pay the price. Massachusetts House Bill H.3704, An Act relative to healthy youth, would ensure that all sexual education in the state would be comprehensive, medically accurate and age appropriate so that fewer young women will be denied their education. The bill has already passed the senate and was hours away from passing last term. This bill, this step towards eradicating gender discrimination, lies on our shoulders as citizens. Call your house representative and urge them to vote yes on Bill H.3704, An Act relative to healthy youth.

### House Ways and Means Script

Representative Sanchez, we are concerned that young people are not getting the tools they need to best prepare themselves for the future. As the sponsor of An Act eliminating racial and ethnic health disparities in the Commonwealth and a co-sponsor of A Bill to advance contraceptive insurance coverage, both bills that try to close opportunity gaps between minority and majority to ensure that all people are healthy and safe. An Act relative to healthy youth is just the kind of bill you should support. In addition, given your 100% rating by NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts, you can continue to show your commitment to reproductive rights and health by supporting this legislation to its passage.

The consequences of inadequate and medically inaccurate sexual education are grave. Massachusetts ranks 19th in the nation for HIV and 17th for syphilis. Most gonorrhea and chlamydia cases in the state occur among people ages 15-24. The state spends millions of dollars each year treating STDs, but has yet to invest in preventative education. Young people in Massachusetts are ill equipped to make basic healthy choices and there is an epidemic in our country – Massachusetts included – of sexual violence in part caused by an inability to articulate and understand consent. One in five girls in Massachusetts public schools have experienced sexual violence. 6% of young girls (middle school aged) and 20% of teen girls have reported experiencing dating violence. This could be mitigated if schools taught students the communications skills needed to articulate and understand consent and communicate in a healthy way in relationships, and form healthy relationships.

The dangerous consequences of the subpar sexual education requirements are greater for those who are non-white, low income, and/or LGBTQ+. In Massachusetts, the teen birth rate among Hispanic teens is more than three
times that of white teens. Teen pregnancy has long term negative effects on the economy, as teen mothers tend to have much lower earning potential. LGBTQ+ teens are also more likely to engage in riskier sexual behavior. These are just some of the reasons why we are advocating for An Act relative to healthy youth, which requires age-appropriate, medically accurate, comprehensive sexual education in Massachusetts schools that offer it. The curriculum outlined by the bill focuses on aspects such as prevention of teen pregnancy and STDs, emphasis on abstinence as the most effective method, communication in relationships of all sorts, consent, and healthy decision making. This applies to all schools that already offer or plan to offer sexual education.

While opponents of the legislation argue that sexual education should be left to the home for parents to teach their children, the fact of the matter is that only 41% of Massachusetts students reported discussing sex and sexuality in any capacity with their parents. Opponents have also argued that the legislation will mandate sexual education against the will of parents. However, parents will still be allowed to opt their children out of sexual education courses, and see course materials. In addition, opponents argue that this is a mandate for sexual education. the requirements of the bill are not very different from other curriculum requirements. The bill provides guidelines that schools can follow and implement in different ways. Similar to any standardized discipline in Massachusetts, schools can choose their own curriculum as long as it includes the basic provisions outlined in the bill.

According to the Planned Parenthood League of Massachusetts and one of the bill’s sponsors, Rep. James J. O’Day, the cost to the state would be minimal. While there will be some costs implemented on the school districts’ whose sex education does not meet the new requirements, there are school districts whose sexual education already meets and exceeds these requirements, whose curricula could be used as a resource and a base. Some of those costs could include costs for new trainings, new hirings and new materials.

Representative Sanchez, we admire your previous commitments to combatting medical and health inequality, demonstrated by sponsoring bills such as A Bill to ensure patient safety and An Act eliminating racial and ethnic health disparities in the Commonwealth and co-sponsoring A Bill to advance contraceptive insurance coverage. We are urging you to, once again, stand for the health and safety of our community by calling for a vote on An Act relative to healthy youth and voting it out favorably.

### Letter to the Legislator

As people who live in your district, we are writing to you to help push for An Act relative to healthy youth's passage in the House. As someone who makes important choices that impact millions of people, you know better than anyone how vital getting information is to smart and responsible decision making to ensure they have lifelong health. With your sponsorship of An Act safeguarding the health care decisions of young adults, you have demonstrated an awareness of the importance of young people making decisions that are best for them and the delicacy of matters of sexual health. There is another issue that deserves your attention. In Massachusetts public schools, students are not being guaranteed comprehensive, and medically accurate sexual education. The consequences of students not learning about consent and healthy relationships are vast. One example of these repercussions is the fact that 1 in 5 female teen students in public schools in Massachusetts have been assaulted.

With proper sexual education, people will make healthier decisions. All these reasons and more are why you should support An Act relative to healthy youth, which ensures that all schools that provide sexual education will provide age appropriate, medically accurate, comprehensive, and inclusive sexual education that covers topics such as pregnancy and STD prevention, critical thinking skills, communication, and healthy relationships.

This is not a mandate, as opponents of this bill would lead you to believe. School districts will still have flexibility in how they teach sexual education. Neither does it force parents to do something they are not comfortable with. Parents will still get to decide if they are comfortable with their children taking sexual education, and can opt them out. The benefits of this bill are worth the costs, and anyone who is uncomfortable with it is not negatively impacted by it. We ask you to push for this bill’s passage in the House.

### Campaign Journal

**Anne**

*Meeting with Nikki Goldschein, Government Affairs Associate at Planned Parenthood; and Leda Anderson, Policy Counsel*

From this meeting, I learned more about the history of the legislation and other perspectives and key beneficiaries, namely LGBTQ+ inclusion and STDs. Planned Parenthood also informed me about organizations they are working with, how they are framing the issue, and challenges of passing the bill and reasons for opposition to it. They also gave me
names of people I could talk to about this bill. Overall, the meeting went well. It helped give me a better overall view of the bill and past efforts and ways the bill was being framed now. It gave me some more to think about in regards to how to approach our own advocacy about the bill. Through this meeting, I was able to get a more holistic view of the bill and issues surrounding it and get ideas for more research to do. I was also able to think more about how I talk about the bill. In trading some important statistics back and forth, I was able to think about what might make the most impact. In addition, learning more about the history of the bill allowed me to think more about how the bill is being approached now the evolving issues with both the legislation and sexual education in Massachusetts.

Sivan

Meeting with Massachusetts Representative James O’Day

In preparation for our video project, Annie and I spoke to our bill’s sponsor. We had already spoken with the representative before and heard why he felt the need to continually advocate for this bill. In our initial meeting with him he told us of his time as a social worker and how during that time, he would meet with young teen girls who genuinely did not know how they became pregnant. When we met with him once again, to fill him, he reiterated this story. I expressed to him that we really would appreciate any stories he had to articulate the urgency of this legislation, and he was more than happy to do so. Additionally, he went out of his way to connect the legislation with pressing issues of the day, such as the #metoo movement.

 Updates

As of June 7, 2018, the bill had passed and was referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means.

For more information

View the bill:
malegislature.gov/Bills/190/H3704

Planned Parenthood
plannedparenthood.org
Improving Access to Mental Health Services for Children

Improving access to community and home-based behavioral health care services for children with mental health disorders

Sage Rosenthal ’19
Maegann Stafford ’19

Under the Massachusetts Mental Health Parity Law, insurers are required to provide the full range of inpatient, intermediate, and outpatient services to its policyholders. Private insurance companies, however, have failed to comply with parity and are refusing to cover necessary wraparound services. As a result, individuals are being forced to either pay the steep premiums, seek costly secondary MassHealth insurance, or forgo treatment that may be necessary for the well-being of their child. Bill H.488, An Act to increase access to children’s mental health services in the community, will require private insurers to provide coverage for community and home-based behavioral health care services to children with mental health disorders by private insurance. Families under commercial insurance will have access to the same community-based services as those covered under MassHealth.

The Bill
H.488: An Act to increase access to children’s mental health services in the community

Elevator Speech
Hello, our names are Maegann Stafford and Sage Rosenthal, and we are Brandeis University students with a sincere passion for mental health. It is the responsibility of the Commonwealth to ensure that all children, especially those with a serious emotional disturbance, have the opportunity to receive the services they need to live a meaningful life. We are concerned with the 75% of children in our country that do not receive treatment for their mental health disorders. About 1 in 5 children and adolescents experience symptoms of a diagnosable mental health disorder each year. By not providing this already vulnerable community treatment, we are placing them at an even greater life-threatening risk. Currently, private insurers do not cover “wraparound services” and the lack of coverage for these community/home-based services are forcing families to pay premiums or seek secondary MassHealth insurance. Community/Home-based services are a successful treatment option that allow children with serious emotional
disturbances to grow up at home with their families to achieve positive outcomes. We ask that the committee on financial services please vote Bill H.488 favorably from committee. Thank you.

■ Excerpts from the Storybook

Expert Testimony from Dr. Cunningham, Professor of Psychology at Brandeis University: “Research demonstrates that the earlier we provide support and intervention to children who are either at risk or already demonstrating evidence of a disorder, the better their long-range outcome.”

Expert Testimony from Courtney Chelo, Children’s Behavioral Health Project manager at the CMHC: “This money is getting spent either way, and it makes far more sense to spread it out, cents on the dollar, across a population covered by commercial insurers, rather than by having it shift to state and onto families in a really direct way.”

■ House Ways and Means Script

Good afternoon, and thank you for the opportunity to speak with you about an important mental health issue affecting our community. Our names are Maegann Stafford and Sage Rosenthal, and we are conscientious students of Brandeis University who desire to achieve positive change through our commitment to social justice. It is the responsibility of the Commonwealth to ensure that all children, especially those facing mental health challenges, have the opportunity to receive the services they need to live a meaningful life.

There is a Spanish proverb that says “De malen costumbres nacen buenas leyes,” meaning all the good laws are originated from bad customs, and it couldn’t be more truthful.

Under the Massachusetts Mental Health Parity Law, insurers are required to provide the full range of inpatient, intermediate, and outpatient services to its policyholders. Private insurance companies, however, have failed to comply with parity, and are refusing to cover necessary wraparound services. As a result, individuals are being forced to either pay the steep premiums, seek costly secondary MassHealth insurance, or forgo treatment that may be necessary for the well-being of their child.

Unfortunately, the ambiguity of the kinds of services considered “medically necessary” has created a loophole that private insurers have managed to exploit to evade their responsibilities and ultimately maintain their profitability.

This must be remedied, and can be remedied if you each commit to the principles of social responsibility and “ask what you can do.” You can support H.488: “An Act to increase access to children’s mental health services in the community.” Although it was voted into study by the Joint Committee on Financial Services, we fully expect the substance of the legislation to be incorporated into a larger bill on children’s mental health in the coming months. We’re confident because of the sheer magnitude of the problem, and the consequences of inactivity are severe. It’s simply not fair that families, taxpayers, and the Commonwealth should be overburdened because the insurance companies won't pay their share. They need to be held accountable!

Community/home-based services have proven to be successful treatment option that allow children with serious emotional disturbances to grow up at home with their families to achieve positive outcomes. Courtney Chelo, Project Manager at the Children's Mental Health Campaign said, “This money is getting spent either way, and it makes far more sense to spread it out, cents on the dollar, across a population covered by commercial insurers, rather than by having it shift to state and onto families in a really direct way.” She’s exactly right!

Opponents will claim that this mandated benefit will not reduce overall health care costs, but instead unduly penalize private insurance providers, and limit the freedom of employers to provide health benefits as they see fit. It has been estimated that insurers will pay an additional cost of $28.34 per member per month because of these mandates, and mandated benefits already account for roughly $2.1 billion (6.45%) of total medical expenses. However, there are a few flaws with these assumptions, so allow me to paint a more realistic picture of the situation. Healthcare costs have increased steadily over the past decades, and they don't appear to be slowing down any time soon. So, sure, premium costs have risen, but they rise ever year as healthcare continues to become more and more affordable.

What the insurance companies are misunderstanding is that the long-term benefits of offering mandated benefits to consumers, equates to improved preventative care and fewer costly emergency services. In terms of mental health, offering consumer and home based treatment options will minimize the need for costly hospitalizations and in-patient treatment facilities which are typically the first health access points in the event of a serious emotional disturbance. Businesses can reduce cost elsewhere or implement cost-sharing strategies whereas average, hard-working families are being forced to bare a significantly greater percentage of the costs. While I understand the dilemma of wanting to respect the interests of the business community, you were elected by the people and it is their interest you have sworn to protect.

Chairman Sánchez we’re familiar with your past efforts for healthcare equality, such as H.622 and H.2222, and we ask that you continue to be a champion of mental health issues. Additionally, we ask that you please persuade the
committee to both support and follow the substance of H.488, as it evolves or is incorporated within other health reform legislation. It is imperative that you continue honoring your civic duty and protect those who are most vulnerable, especially since their vulnerability is often magnified by other confounding factors such as their race, ethnicity, age, gender, or socio-economic status.

We sincerely appreciate you taking time from your busy schedule to hear our perspective on this important issue.

**Letter to the Legislator**

We were happy to hear your speech at the end of January about your commitment to mental health issues in early childhood in the remaining few months of the legislative session. As your team works on the remaining legislative bills, we encourage you to include bill H.488, “An Act to increase access to children’s mental health services in the community.”

This legislation is not only close to our hearts, but to all those families who are suffering without mental health service coverage for their children. Currently, children of the Commonwealth with private insurance cannot easily access community-based services such as outpatient therapy, mobile crisis intervention, in home therapy, and other services. Children under MassHealth insurance are already able to receive these services, but families under commercial insurance are forced to either go without care, or pay for “secondary” MassHealth insurance to obtain these critical services.

As a community, the Commonwealth is responsible for the future of its children. Studies have shown that mental disorders have a high prevalence rate; half of all lifetime mental illnesses display themselves by age 14, and three quarters are displayed by age 24. Therefore, it is important to intervene and treat these children at a young age, because without the appropriate treatment, children may experience delayed development.

Not only will this legislation help provide necessary services for children to live a meaningful life, but also in long-term, this bill will be cost-saving. By providing wraparound home-based care to children, there will be an increased emphasis on preventative care that will ultimately minimize hospitalization. Therefore, commercial insurers should welcome the opportunity to decrease the need for costly hospitalizations.

Despite this problem having major consequences to family, Massachusetts is already providing these services through MassHealth. It is about time that private insurance companies catch up to MassHealth, and unburden both the state and families in the Commonwealth. We ask that you recognize the immense burden these families face daily in maintaining their children’s lives, and include bill H.488 to the remaining legislation regarding children’s mental health.

**Campaign Journal**

**Sage**

**Meeting with Chairman Senator Eldridge’s office**

Maegann and I went to the joint committee of financial services office to try and gain some insight as to why this piece of legislation was sent to study. We were hoping that this information will either help us fight to push this bill forward in other legislations through understanding its flaws, or fighting the opposition money conversation. We spoke with the scheduler and staffer who sat at the front desk. He unfortunately did not work directly with our piece of legislation, but he was able to provide us with some insight and a further connection in the committee that we had a later meeting with.

He explained that Senator Eldridge, Chairman of the Joint Committee of Financial Services, very much supports children mental health bills and provided this bill a “favorable report,” but it could have not been passed because of money or sometimes bills need more than one term to be pushed forward. We found out the reason this bill was not voted out favorably was because the House Chairman of the Joint Committee would not agree to move this legislation forward.

Through this meeting we gained some insight on what happened to our bill, and created a new connection with Ryan Gelman who is a Legislative and Budget Director in the office of Senator James B. Eldridge. We later connected with Ryan via email and scheduled a meeting with him for our next State House visit on Wednesday 3/28. Both of these meetings became instrumental in the remaining weeks we had in this class. I felt both men were incredibly willing to help and hear us out, as well as provide advice.

**Updates**

As of July 18, 2018, the bill had been sent to study. See H.4778.

**For more information**

**View the bill:**
malegislature.gov/Bills/190/H488

**Children’s Mental Health Campaign**
childrensmentalhealthcampaign.org
n the United States, 1.2 million workers can lose their jobs if they take time off in order to take care of a family medical emergency or a newborn. The current Federal and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), signed by President Bill Clinton in 1993, was the first step in mandating employers to allow their employees to take time off of work. However, FMLA is unpaid leave, only covers employees that work for a private sector employee with 50 or more employees, and is twelve weeks long, and excludes certain family members. In response to these shortcomings, Bill S.1048/H.2172 will extend coverage to all public and private employees and guaranteed paid leave, strengthening worker productivity and health of families.

The Bill
S.1048/H.2172: An Act to establish a paid family and medical leave insurance program

Elevator Speech
Our names are Samantha Greenberg and Ellery Riccio and we are health policy students at Brandeis University. Only through responsible planning will we strengthen businesses and families. 1.2 million workers can lose their jobs if they take time off in order to take care of a family medical emergency or a newborn. Employees are forced to go to work when they are sick; not only does this affect their health but also the health of others. Luckily, An Act to establish a paid family and medical leave insurance program (H.2172/S.1048) allows employees job-protected paid leave to recover from a serious illness or injury, to care for a seriously ill or injured family member, or care for a newborn child. Currently, five states: California, Colorado, New York, Rhode Island and New Jersey have implemented a similar bill. In California, 90% employers reported that Paid Family and Medical Leave has a positive effect on productivity and a 99% reported a positive effect on employee morale. In Colorado, paid family and medical leave allowed an executive assistant recently diagnosed with multiple sclerosis to take leave to take care of herself. Please vote to move this bill favorably out of the Joint Committee on Labor and Workforce Development.
Excerpts from the Storybook

Sam’s Story

Sam* is a research scientist and the associate director of a university program in the Boston area. Both of her parents fell ill with horrible diseases less than a year from each other. She had to take on new caregiving responsibilities on top of working 40 hours a week and taking care of her family. Eventually, Sam had to leave her job in order to care for her parents. Her whole world was caring for her family; there wasn’t any time for work, an experience she said was “emotionally draining.” The Paid Family Leave Act would give people like Sam the peace of mind that they can care for loved ones while not worrying about losing their jobs.

*Name changed for privacy.

Op-Ed

Ellery

“Uggghhhhh” you say as you turn your alarm off and roll over, pretending that for 5 more minutes you don’t have to go into work. This is a feeling all of us can relate to a little too well. But imagine that feeling for a parent who had a child not even two weeks ago as they get ready for an 8 hour-work day away from their new family, when they should be bonding and caring for their newborn. Or an employee suffering from cancer or multiple sclerosis, as they get dressed and head out the door to go to work, but what they need to do is stay at home, rest, and recuperate.

Susan Townsend* felt this pain for too long. She is a third grade teacher at an elementary school in central Massachusetts. After the birth of her first child she was forced to return to work 13 days after giving birth, using her vacation and sick days to take time off. Katherine was forced to hire help to watch her newborn during the day. She was unable to bond with her baby in his first few months; something that she can never get back.

87% of employees throughout the state experience this pain every morning because they do not have paid leave. 1.2 million can lose their jobs if they take time off to care for their newborn or for themselves. Employers are not prioritizing and taking care of their employees. Some are so focused on maximizing profits that they don’t want to pay an employee who is missing work; while others cannot afford to pay them. Either way this forces employees to put work over their health in order to continue to make the money needed for food and housing and to keep their jobs.

Luckily, Massachusetts can provide a solution that benefits employees and employers. An Act to establish a paid family and medical leave insurance program will make employees eligible for job-protected paid leave to recover from a serious illness or injury, to care for a seriously ill or injured family member, or care for a new born child. This bill also mandates employers to restore the employees’ previous position with the same status, pay, benefits, length of service credit, and seniority as the date of leave.

Paid family and medical leave is so easy a caveman could do it. The employer and employee pay 1.72 each, weekly, into the insurance fund set up by the state. Once an illness arises, or the birth of child occurs, the employee submits proof to the employer. After the case is reviewed and is seen as legitimate, the employee is allowed up to 12 weeks of family leave or 26 weeks of medical leave per year.

States like California, New York, Colorado, Rhode Island, and New Jersey have already implemented paid family and medical leave. Employers noticed a positive effect on productivity, performance, and employee morale. And the employees, well they noticed they were finally at home taking care of themselves, a child, or a family member.

So you might be wondering, “what’s the hold up?” or “why don’t we have paid family and medical leave in Massachusetts?” While this concept seems like common sense to you, those in the State House seem to differ as this bill still has not passed yet. Businesses are concerned with the additional costs and are skeptical of the government’s ability to maintain such a program; however, for less than two dollars a week employers can ensure employees get the leave they deserve. Call, email, or even write your legislators and educate them about the importance of paid family and medical leave to you. If the bill becomes a ballot question, please tell your friends, family, anyone you see on the streets on your way to the polls, to vote this critical paid family and medical leave into law.

And hopefully, the next time you are ill instead of suffering through an 8-hour work day, you’ll be in bed, resting, right where you should be.

*Name changed for privacy.

House Ways and Means Script

Our names are Samantha Greenberg and Ellery Riccio. We are health policy students at Brandeis University and we’re concerned with job security and public health here in Massachusetts. Only through responsible planning will we strengthen businesses and families. 1.2 million workers can lose their jobs if they take time off in order to take care of a family medical emergency or a newborn. Employees are forced to go to work when they are sick; not only does this affect their health but also the health of others.

Of those who are eligible for leave under the federal Family and Medical Leave Act, many cannot afford to take
unpaid time off from work and are left with the dilemma of keeping their job or taking care of a family member. No one should have to make that decision.

An Act to establish a paid family and medical leave insurance program (H.2172/S.1048) allows employees job-protected paid leave to recover from a serious illness or injury, to care for a seriously ill or injured family member, or care for a newborn child. Paid Family and Medical Leave allows 12 weeks of leave in a benefit year for family leave and 26 weeks of the benefit year for medical leave. This bill mandates employers to restore the employee’s previous position with the same status, pay, benefits, length of service credit, and seniority of the date of leave.

While this bill provides several necessary benefits, there is a small startup cost. A system would have to be created to collect the money that will be provided to the insurance companies. Building this system would cost 20 million dollars, however, this is a one-time fee. This cost would go towards infrastructure and employment. While 20 million dollars seems like a significant amount of money, last month tax revenues totaled 2.974 billion dollars, 158 million dollars or 5.8% above the revised January benchmark. We clearly have the money.

The beauty of this insurance program is that it is funded by the employer and the employee. Cost estimates show that the employer and worker would contribute $3.44, or $1.72 each, weekly. The government does not have to contribute to the ongoing cost, and neither do tax payers.

Four states – California, New York, Rhode Island and New Jersey – administer paid medical leave through disability insurance. California extended disability insurance benefits to now cover paid family and medical leave. In order to set up this additional insurance program, California used money given to them from the federal government leftover from the New Deal. Since they were adding onto existing disability insurance, they already had a starting point which reduced costs.

Since the first paid family and leave program started 15 years ago, we know what benefits are to come. A survey given in California concluded that 99% of employers saw positive or neutral effects on employee morale and 91% reports positive or neutral effects on profitability and performance. Further, businesses can predict the costs associated with paid leave. Without paid family and medical leave, the employer must may the worker on leave and the temporary replacement worker. But with such paid leave, the employer can only pay the temporary worker because the worker on leave is covered by insurance premiums that have previously been paid over the time of employment.

While a major concern is employees wrongly taking leave, there are strict guidelines in place to prevent abuse of the system. Employees must submit a note from a healthcare provider explaining the severity of the illness. 91% of employers in California reported no suspected abuse of the system. Another potential issue is an increase in premium cost over time. This was not seen in any of the states that currently have paid family and medical leave, not even in California which has had this insurance for 15 years.

While your concern is financial, it is only a one-time fee from the government to put in place a necessary insurance program that will last for decades.

Chairman Sanchez, I urge you to make this bill a priority and vote it out of committee favorably. Thank you.

Letter to the Legislator

As a neighbor and resident of Waltham for four years, we have a vested interest in the financial strength of our community. We understand that operating successful businesses, whether they be large or small, impacts the greater good of all employees and employers in our neighborhood. And, for successful businesses to operate, employers must ensure that their employees are happy, which usually means that they’re receiving the benefits that they need. We are soon-to-be graduates of Brandeis University and excited to join the healthy and productive Massachusetts workforce. Fortunately, we are both young and don’t worry about health impairments. Unfortunately, our friends’ parents are not in the same boat. My friends’ father was recently diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis. Rheumatoid arthritis is a chronic and inflammatory disease, preventing him from commuting to work.

Luckily, there’s a bill in the Joint Committee on Labor and Workforce Development that can help us solve the problem that our friends and our friends’ parents face. An Act to establish a paid family and medical leave insurance program, House #2172 and Senate #1048, allows employees job-protected paid leave to recover from a serious illness or injury, to care for a seriously ill or injured family member, or care for a newborn child.

Many times, employees, like my friends’ dad, are forced to go to work when they are sick or hurting. This affects their performance and their health, but also the performance and health of others. Currently, five states: California, Colorado, New York, Rhode Island and New Jersey have implemented a similar bill. Why can’t we? In California, 90% employers reported that Paid Family and Medical Leave has a positive effect on productivity and a 99% reported a positive effect on employee morale. Evidence suggests that employers and employees benefit from the bills. Paid policy leave improves employee retention and reduces turnover rates.

Previously, you’ve sponsored An Act furthering health empowerment and affordability by leveraging transformative health care, S.2211, which goes hand-in-hand with Paid Family and Medical Leave. Please vote to move this bill favorably out
of the Joint Committee on Labor and Workforce Development. Spread the word to your colleagues about paid medical and family leave.

Excerpts from Campaign Journals

Ellery
Samantha and I signed up online to be volunteers for the coalition Raise Up Massachusetts, one of the major coalitions supporting Paid Family and Medical Leave. They host events, collect signatures to send the bill to the ballot, and share stories to help spread support for Paid Family and Medical Leave. However, we wanted to be more involved than just informing members of our community about Paid Family and Medical Leave and collecting signatures.

... I think if Samantha and I did not have full class schedules it would have been easier to be involved in this coalition. Raise Up held meetings once a month on Thursdays at 1:30, however I had a class that I could not miss at that time. If we were able to go to the coalition’s building, talk to people there and form relationships in person, rather than over the phone, we might have succeeded in having a more active role. This interaction demonstrated how hard it is to connect with people over email and taught me that it is always a good idea to follow up in person.

Samantha

On scheduling meetings
Our communication with RaiseUp, unfortunately, was limited, due to inopportune scheduling conflicts on both our side and the Coalition’s end. It was difficult to arrange times to meet with the Coalition’s leadership as busy college students with prior obligations on campus. Most opportunities to meet with the Coalition occurred during the workday, between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., and both Ellery and I had classes and assignments and extracurricular activities and meetings during these hours. Although we had trouble connecting with RaiseUp, we found extensive information about our bill, Paid Family and Medical Leave, on their website and through our connections on the Brandeis campus.

We also experienced scheduling issues with senators. We weren’t able to schedule a meeting with Senator Karen Spilka. I called her office in early March, but were told that she’s got a terribly busy schedule the next few months, and that she doesn’t have time to discuss her bills with students. Looking back, it would have been helpful to arrange a meeting with one of her legislative aides, but I wasn’t as familiar with the system as I am now.

Updates
As of June 28, 2018, the bill had been passed and signed by the governor into Chapter 121 of the Acts of 2018.

For more information

View the bill:
malegislature.gov/Bills/190/H2172

Raise Up
raiseupma.org
Providing Access to End of Life Options

Enabling terminally ill patients access to medical aid in dying

Javier Mendez ’18
Marlee Nork ’19

In life, there is one fact that all people must grapple with and that is death. However, for some people, the looming shadow of death is less of an existential inevitability and more of a concrete imminent finality. For those who know their death is imminent, for those who are terminally ill, death can be an end to suffering and distress. If we as human beings have a universal right to live, then we must also have a right to death on our own terms. Bill S.1225/H.1194, an Act relative to end of life options, would allow terminally ill, Massachusetts residents with prognoses of 6 months or less to live and who have been deemed mentally capable, to be prescribed with a medication they will self-administer to hasten their deaths. Seven other states – Oregon, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Washington, Virginia and Montana – have similar laws in place.

The Bill
S.1225/H.1194: An Act relative to end of life options

Elevator Speech

Good morning, Representative. We are students at Brandeis University, majoring in public health, and have been studying an issue that impacts us all. In life, there is one fact that all people must grapple with, and that is death. With that in mind, when death becomes unavoidable, we should be able to maintain our freedom and have the right to choose how we die. Patient autonomy is a core value of biomedicine and such autonomy should be maintained at the end of life, when death is inevitable and there is nothing medicine can do. An Act relative to end of life options (H.1194/S.1225) allows terminally ill, Massachusetts residents with prognoses of 6 months or less to live and who have been deemed mentally capable, to be prescribed with a medication they will self-administer to hasten their deaths.

Seven other states – Oregon, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Washington, Virginia and Montana – have similar laws in place. Research has shown, that many of those who have been prescribed with the medication chose not to take it, yet, the sense of control that these patients gained by having the choice to take the medication improved their...
quality of life greatly. In 2016, in Oregon, 89.5% of patients cited loss of autonomy as why they sought the medication. 89.5% of patients cited an inability to take part in activities that give their life meaning and 65.4% cited a loss of dignity. However, only 133/204 patients, 65.2%, prescribed with the medication actually took it. Many terminally ill patients suffer from no longer having a sense of control either over their bodies or their outcomes – their deaths are guaranteed and there is nothing they can do to stop them. Please vote to move An Act relative to end of life options favorably out of the Joint Committee on Public Health so the Commonwealth’s terminally ill patients can maintain their autonomy and freedom up until the moment they die.

Excerpts from the Storybook

Roger Kligler’s Story

Roger Kligler, a former primary care physician, is currently suing the state of Massachusetts for his right to die. Dr. Kligler was diagnosed with prostate cancer, and after aggressive treatment and even being in remission, his cancer returned and he was deemed terminally ill.

Dr. Kligler has had the unique experience of treating many terminally ill patients throughout this career. He has provided them with palliative care to make them as comfortable as they could be and he has removed life-sustaining treatments from those who no longer wanted to succumb slowly to their deadly diseases.

“These terminally ill people [in Oregon] did not want to die. Like me, they would have given anything to live. They just wanted the option of a graceful exit. We should all have that same right,” he said.

Dr. Kligler believes that denying medical aid in dying puts the patient’s needs behind those of physicians. From his own experiences living with a terminal illness, he believes that medical aid in dying should be a fundamental right as it gives citizens with no possible chance at living the comfort of being able to die on their own terms.

Op-Ed

Marlee

I am not “pro-death;” I simply believe that every individual has the right to make whatever informed decision they deem appropriate regarding their medical care. Take any class on medical ethics and patient autonomy will be at the forefront of every discussion. Patient autonomy is a core value of biomedicine and such autonomy should be maintained at the end of life, when death is inevitable, and there is no traditional treatment option.

Imagine going to the doctor for a sore throat, and instead of telling you what you are suffering from and what your treatment options are, the doctor just sends you home with a bottle of pills and no explanation. As minor as a sore throat seems, you would not be okay with that, would you? It is your right to know every detail about your condition and it is your right to decide your treatment.

Medical aid in dying is the practice of allowing terminally ill patients with prognoses of six months or less to live, who have been deemed physically and mentally capable, to be prescribed with a medication they would self-administer to painlessly, hasten their deaths. Medical aid in dying allows patients going through the physical pain of their bodies deteriorating, breaking and self-destructing more and more each day – and the psychological pain of not being able to do anything about it – to retain their patient autonomy. Medical aid in dying gives patients’ freedom over their treatment, when medically speaking, they have no treatment.

Those in opposition to medical aid in dying claim that by enacting such legislation, it is the government’s way of killing off those already at a disadvantage – the poor and the disabled. Medical aid in dying is a way of empowering patients who have no other option, thereby giving them the autonomy that they lost. If the government or their doctors used this medication without their request, that is (1) illegal and (2) against the fundamental reason why such legislation is desired.

Oregon, California, Vermont, Colorado, Hawaii, Washington, Washington D.C. and Montana currently authorize medical aid in dying. In 2016, in Oregon, 204 patients were prescribed with the medication. Only 133 took it. 89.5% cited loss of autonomy, 89.5% cited inability to participate in activities that give their lives meaning and 65.4% cited loss of dignity as main reasons for requesting the medication. And even so, only 65.2% of patients took the medication; just the sense of control they gained over their outcome by having that choice improved their quality of life greatly. Additionally, 88.6% of such patients died at home. Medical aid in dying not only allows patients to exercise and maintain their autonomy, it makes death more comfortable. It makes something that is, by nature, painful and uncomfortable, peaceful and painless.

You might be wondering why Massachusetts, one of the most liberal states, constantly ahead of the legislative bandwagon, has not authorized such a practice. Legislators and advocates have been working tirelessly to pass such a bill, since 2011. Although they have made immense progress gaining support from the public, the most recent bills, in both the House and Senate, were sent to study. I urge you to call, write or email your legislators and implore them to support the bill on medical aid and dying that will be filed next session. I urge you to call, write or email your legislators.
and educate them on why medical aid in dying is, simply, an extension of patient autonomy, a founding principle of our societally revered medical system.

Patients who seek this medication do not do so because they wish to be dead, they do so because they are already dead.

**House Ways and Means Script**

Our names are Javier Mendez and Marlee Nork and we are here today to talk to you about House Bill 1194, An Act relative to end of life options. We are students at Brandeis University, residing in Waltham. We are studying public health and health policy and, through our studies, have become very passionate about medical aid in dying. In life, there is one fact that all people must grapple with, and that is death. With that in mind, when death becomes unavoidable, we should be able to maintain our freedom and have the right to choose how we die. Many terminally ill patients suffer from no longer having a sense of control over their bodies or their outcomes. These patients should have the freedom and autonomy to gain control over their deaths when they, ultimately, have no chance at recovery. An Act relative to end of life options would allow terminally ill patients in Massachusetts with prognoses of 6 months or less to live and who have been deemed mentally capable, to be prescribed with a medication they will self-administer, to hasten their deaths.

Before we talk about the financial implications of the bill, we want to give you some background information. Seven other states – Oregon, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Washington, Virginia and Montana – have similar laws in place. Oregon being the state with the most data on the law’s effect. Oregon passed the bill in 1997 and since its inception, 1,749 patients have been prescribed with the medication and 1,127 have ingested it and died as a result. Additionally, 2016 data shows that out of the total deaths in the state, only 37.2 per 10,000 total deaths (0.372%) can be attributed to medical aid in dying. Not only do a significant number of patients who are prescribed with the medication choose not to take it, death with dignity accounts for less than 1% of total deaths.

The public has steadily shown an increase in support for medical aid in dying, especially in Massachusetts. The Massachusetts Medical Society recently changed its longstanding opposing stance on this bill to neutral and changed the wording it uses to describe the bill from “physician assisted suicide,” to “medical aid in dying.” According to the Death with Dignity website, polls have shown that 7 out of 10 Massachusetts voters are in favor of passing legislation allowing mentally capable, terminally ill patients to be prescribed with medication to hasten their deaths.

A main concern that the opposition to this bill raises stems from their concern that this bill has the potential to target vulnerable populations. We see that you sponsored bill H.622, An Act eliminating racial and ethnic health disparities in the Commonwealth and we want to ensure you that An Act relative to end of life options will only empower patients, not discriminate against them. A patient could be prescribed this medication only if they are terminally ill, with a prognosis of 6 months or less to live, and have been deemed mentally and physically capable of self-administering the drug.

Representative Kafka stated that the cost of implementing this law is uncertain since it has never reached the Ways and Means Committee. However, speaking strictly on government spending, medical aid in dying is significantly cheaper than palliative care and end-of-life care. If this bill is passed, it is of upmost importance that it safeguards vulnerable populations, such as the poor and the disabled, and those who do not wish to use this medication so it is not just seen as a “cheaper solution” or a way to avoid expensive end-of-life care costs.

That being said, passing this bill will not have a significant impact on government spending nor will it be expensive for the Commonwealth. In literature on legislation like this bill, in other states, and their effectiveness, spending and cost are rarely mentioned. When cost to implement this legislation is mentioned, the details only indicate that there will not be a noticeable difference in overall spending. The goal of this bill is for medical aid in dying drugs to be treated the same way as any other prescription: insurance companies can elect whether or not to cover the medication. In 2017, in Oregon, 99.1% of patients who were prescribed with the medication had it covered by their insurance, both private insurance and Medicare or Medicaid.

In Oregon, the startup and maintenance costs of this legislation included: establishing administrative rules and policies, setting up the reporting and data system, preparing forms and instructions, establishing and convening advisory committees, conducting data analysis, preparing reports, answering media questions, setting up and posting documents on the web and consulting with the Department of Justice. Most of the fiscal cost of this bill will be to keep records and provide data to the public about the number of people who are prescribed with the medication, who take the medication and the demographics of those people in annual reports.

Chairman Sánchez, I urge you to make this bill a priority and vote it out of committee favorably so terminally ill patients in the Commonwealth can maintain their autonomy when their deaths are unavoidable. Thank you.
Letter to the Legislator

Our names are Javier Mendez and Marlee Nork and we are students at Brandeis University, residing in Waltham. We study public health and health policy and, through our studies, we have become passionate about medical aid in dying. We believe that everybody should have the freedom to choose how they die, when death becomes imminent and unavoidable. Many terminally ill patients suffer, psychologically, from no longer having a sense of control over their bodies or their outcomes – their deaths are guaranteed and there is nothing they can do to stop them. An Act relative to end of life options (H.1194/S.1225) allows terminally ill patients in Massachusetts, with prognoses of 6 months or less to live, to be prescribed a medication they will self-administer to hasten their deaths. Patients must be deemed physically and mentally capable by two physicians and a mental health expert. Each patient must file an oral and written request within 15 days of each other and two people must witness the written request: one of whom cannot be entitled to the patient’s inheritance. Currently the bill is in the Joint Committee on Public Health and we are writing to urge you to vote it favorably out of committee.

A main concern from the opposition stems from their fear that this bill will be used to target vulnerable populations and those with disabilities. The language in this bill ensures that there is no possible way for people who do not meet the eligibility criteria to be prescribed this medication. If the patient is not terminally ill with a prognosis of 6 months or less to live, or deemed both mentally and physically capable of self-administering the drug, by their physician, consulting physician and a mental health professional, they will not be prescribed the medication. The opposition also maintains that family members of those with disabilities will seek this treatment as a cheaper option. However, only the patients can request the medication and coercion is an offense punishable by jail time and/or a fine.

Six other states – Oregon, California, Colorado, Washington, Virginia, and Montana – have similar laws in place and research has shown that many of those who have been prescribed with such medication opted not to take it. Just the sense of control they gained over their outcome, when death was the ultimate and only certainty, improved their quality of life greatly by allowing them to maintain their autonomy. Additionally, they were also able to die painlessly at home, in a familiar and comfortable environment, rather than in a hospital bed.

We see that you supported bill S.2211, An Act furthering health empowerment and affordability by leveraging transformative health care, illustrating your commitment to diverse and fair healthcare. Please vote An Act relative to end of life options favorably out of the Joint Committee on Public Health so terminally ill patients can reap the benefits of diverse and fair healthcare.

Excerpts from Campaign Journals

Javier

Opposition to Medical Aid in Dying Senate Hearing

One of the most interesting events that we were able to attend this semester was one led by those opposed to the bill. The State House hosted an event where medical professionals opposed to the medical aid in dying bill were able to present testimonies on why the practice should not be allowed in Massachusetts. We attended this meeting in order to get a better understanding of the arguments that are made by opponents, and to build up any possible counter arguments that could be made.

While the attendance at this event was rather small the presentation made by the opponents was large, having over 20 doctors and physicians standing on the grand staircase, representing a united force in fighting against medical aid in dying. The testimonials that were made did highlight some of the important ethical issues that arise with this practice, however, the claims that were made by these professionals seemed to be based largely off assumptions of recorded data and patients’ motives for seeking the prescription.

This event was extremely beneficial to our research on how opponents viewed the bill and for how the public responds to hearing testimonials which could come from either side. It was unfortunate that we were unable to make any concrete connections with some of the doctors who were so strongly against the bill, and an interview with someone from the other side could have been beneficial to us in other assignments in which we constructed our own brief testimonial.

Marlee

Meeting with Representative Louis L. Kafka and staffer Mark Hogan

We met with Representative Kafka and Mark for about a half hour and asked more questions about the specifics of the bill, addressing the opposition and Dr. Roger Kligler’s lawsuit against the Commonwealth for his right to die, and how that was impacting the passing of the bill. They spoke to the common argument by the opposition that this bill will be used as a means to discriminate against those with disabilities. Specifically, they stated that they had met with disability advocacy groups and tightened the language of the bill to make it so they were comfortable with the language used. They added that they addressed all of the substantive concerns by the opposition when drafting the final bill for this session and that, this late in the session, the remaining opposition comes from those morally against the bill, and it would be much harder to persuade them to support it. This meeting was very informative because it dispelled the legitimacy of the
opposition and counterarguments raised at the aid in dying opposition event. It also allowed us to narrow and refine our elevator pitch to address the opposition that did not stem from a fundamental disagreement with the bill.

- Update
As of June 13, 2018, the bill has been sent to study. See H.4600.

For more information

View the bill:
malegislature.gov/Bills/190/H1194

Death With Dignity
deathwithdignity.org
Opioid-related death is the leading cause of death for individuals under 50 nationwide. In Massachusetts, over 2,000 people died from opioid-related overdoses in 2016, which is a record despite the state’s initiatives designed to curb this very problem. As a result, politicians, law enforcement, and medical professionals are facing continuous pressure to develop more creative solutions to reduce opioid-related deaths. Proposed by State Senator William N. Brownsberger, Bill S.1081 would enable cities and towns to implement “safer drug consumption programs”, establishing facilities where people could consume pre-obtained drugs under the supervision of trained medical staff. The primary goals of the bill are to prevent opioid-related deaths by reducing overdoses and spread of infectious diseases. These facilities be equipped to provide other services, such as clean needles and treatment referrals, to improve public health and safety.

The Bill
S.1081: An Act to authorize public health workers to pursue new measures to reduce harm and stigma for people affected by substance use disorders

Elevator Speech
Our names are Sharon Cai and Robin Donohoe, and we are public health students at Brandeis University. Through responsible planning, we can ensure all individuals, healthy or sick, have access to health care and treatment. Massachusetts must strengthen its harm reduction strategies regarding opioid use to keep its communities healthy and protected from infectious diseases and preventable deaths. In 2016, more than 2,000 individuals died from opioid related overdoses in Massachusetts, a record despite the state’s many initiatives designed to curb this problem. The reality of the issue is that many individuals who are addicted to opioids consume and inject drugs in public places, including bathrooms and alleyways, where they are hidden and susceptible to infections and overdoses.

Massachusetts needs facilities where people suffering from addiction can safely use drugs under supervised medical care, receive counseling to discuss future...
treatment options, and have access to clean needles to prevent HIV, other infectious diseases, and blood-borne illnesses. We believe Massachusetts is a national leader in healthcare and establishing safer drug consumption sites will be an essential public health structure that can mitigate preventable deaths, reduce unnecessary healthcare costs and ensure the quality of life of our most vulnerable populations. Will you please vote bill S.1081 out of committee favorably?

■ Excerpt from the Storybook

The Situation

In 2016, more than 2,000 individuals died from opioids-related overdoses in Massachusetts. These overdoses are driven by the underlying chronic disease of opioid addiction or opioid use disorders. People with opioid addiction are at high risk of overdose and death because they often cannot or do not get the care they need.

To reduce the health and societal problems associated with drug use, we need safer drug consumption sites. These are legally sanctioned facilities where people who use drugs can consume, inject, or snort pre-obtained drugs under medical supervision.

Who can benefit?

The homeless population is one vulnerable group. In response to the high rate of mortality from opioid overdoses among this population, Boston Healthcare for the Homeless (BHCHP) started Supportive Place for Observation and Treatment (SPOT).

SPOT offers engagement, support, and medical monitoring, and serves as an entryway to primary care and treatment on demand. While people cannot take drugs inside, it is still a safe space for people who are over-sedated from the use of substances and would otherwise be outside on a street corner, or alone in a public bathroom, at high risk of overdose.

“We talk a lot about overdose prevention, but it’s hard to preach safety if nurses cannot be there to help, to watch over patients,” shared Madeleine Burns, Development Assistant at BHCHP.

■ Op-Ed

Robin

It’s your 10-year high school reunion. You’ve reconnected with your old friends and are excited to hear about what others are doing. You’ve split off from your core group to reconnect with pals from your 12th grade history class. You begin to all joke about the ridiculous final project Mrs. Danilich gave you where everyone scrambled to finish it last minute. “I wonder where Jason is? He was my partner for the project,” you ask. Blank stares follow the question. None of your classmates seem to know how to answer, but someone finally says: “Jason overdosed and died three years after graduating.”

According to the CDC, drug overdoses are the number one killer of individuals under the age of 50 in the United States. In Massachusetts, more than 2,000 people died from opioid-related overdoses in 2016. Individuals who are addicted to opioids come from all walks of life, all races, socioeconomic backgrounds, and education levels. While 2,000 people died in 2016, this number does not begin to cover the number of individuals affected and heartbroken by opioid addiction.

In reality, many individuals who are addicted to opioids inject drugs in public places, including bathrooms and alleyways. Here, they are hidden and susceptible to infections and overdoses. In these open spaces, help may be minutes away, but it takes an outsider to notice that help is needed. Massachusetts needs facilities where people can safely use drugs under supervised medical care. At these sites, users are closely monitored and help is seconds away and always watching. Opioid addiction is an incredibly heartbreaking disease in which someone will stop at nothing to continue to use. Supervised Injection sites allow for an individual to continue to be alive so that in the future, and when they are ready, they will seek treatment. You can’t help someone when they are dead.

Supervised injection sites are critically needed in Massachusetts. In cities like Toronto, the overdose rate has dropped and no individual has overdosed in one of these facilities. Those who are addicted to opioids want to use in a safe and clean location, without scrutiny or stigma. Majority of overdose deaths occur when an individual is using alone, and when no one is able to help. These sites take away that fear of using and dying alone. These sites are also a gateway for addicts to have access to medical care, discuss future treatment options, and have access to clean needles to prevent HIV, and other infectious diseases.

Bill S.1081 establishes a safer drug consumption program within Massachusetts, which will build supervised injection sites in areas that are hit hard by this disease. While Massachusetts has been progressive in many healthcare policies, the city of Boston and South Shore communities have been tragically effected by opioid use. From 2000-2016, more than 5,000 individuals have died from opioid related overdoses within those two communities. This bill must be passed; no more innocent lives can be lost.

Opioid addiction is a tragic disease. One that completely effects the judgment and character of someone you may know and love. Addiction has highs and lows, relapses and recovery. It is an illness of the brain, which must be treated a similarly as any physical illness. All treatment options must
be available, all prevention must be discussed, and no stigma should not be tolerated. Supervised injection sites allow an incredibly sick individual to stay alive until they are ready to seek treatment.

Everyone deserves to make it to their 10-year high school reunion. Bill S.1081 establishes supervised injection sites so those addicted to opioids are able to live long enough to get there.

House Ways and Means Script

Thank you for taking the time to meet with us. As students who live and go to university in Massachusetts and seek to enter the public health workforce, we are invested in measures to protect the health and wellbeing of Massachusetts citizens. As you may know, Massachusetts is a national leader in progressive healthcare reforms and has now a unique opportunity with Senate Bill 1081 to be the first state to implement safer drug consumption programs to reduce unnecessary harm for its citizens. At sites designed to promote safer drug consumption, people can use drugs under supervised medical care, receive counseling to discuss future treatment options, and have access to clean needles to prevent HIV and other infectious diseases.

In Massachusetts, more than 2,000 people died from opioid-related overdoses in 2016, which is a record despite the state’s many initiatives designed to curb this very problem. It is clear that we need to do more to prevent unnecessary deaths. Medically appropriate treatment remains out of reach to the majority of drug users who need it, whether it is because they are not ready for or do not have access to treatment. Establishing drug consumption programs could be the novel approach to supplement existing policies and programs that promote harm reduction. Harm reduction strategies are designed to keep people alive so that we can eventually help them recover from opioid use.

Massachusetts recognized the need for harm reduction and passed a bill in 2006 to implement needle exchange programs. These programs allow people to trade in used syringes for new ones and encourage proper disposal of drug paraphernalia. Needle exchange programs have been successful in reducing transmission of HIV and other blood-borne diseases. In 2005, 14% of new HIV cases were transmitted through injection drug use. In 2014, that number lowered to 4% and saved the state millions of dollars in healthcare costs. The lifetime cost of HIV treatment is estimated to be $379,668 (in 2010 dollars), which is a tremendous cost for a preventable public health problem caused, in part, by sharing contaminated needles. Initial opponents of needle exchange programs argued that these programs would promote intravenous drug use by “enabling” users and increase drug use. However, these arguments have been unfounded. Needle exchange programs acknowledged that people use drugs for a variety of reasons, many because they are dealing with trauma and suffering from addiction, and provide a place to engage drug users in health care and counseling. Legislators who passed the clean needle exchange bill recognized that it was imprudent to allow people to die or be subjected to a living hell.

Safe consumption facilities exist in nearly 100 locations across 66 cities in 10 countries. In North America, INSITE was the first established site located in Vancouver, Canada. Its annual operating costs are $3 million. Per visit, that translates to no more than $14 and INSITE reports seeing $2.90 in return for $0.79 spent. The implementation of these consumption sites worldwide has demonstrated benefits, including improved individual health, increased enrollment in drug treatment, lowered infectious disease rates, and increased access to health and social services. In addition, communities have also seen reduced public drug injection and improperly disposed syringes, drug related crime, and general violence. Given time, community members have embraced the existence of these sites and touted the improvements they have made to the lives of their loved ones and neighbors.

While safer drug consumption sites do not currently exist legally in the U.S., there have been active pushes for implementation in Washington, California, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and New York. In San Francisco, it was determined that for every dollar spent, $2.33 would generate in savings, creating a net savings up $3.5 million. In Baltimore, researchers estimate that while the annual operation costs of the site would be $1.8 million, the site could generate $7.8 million in savings. At consumption sites, we can prevent overdoses that would otherwise send people to emergency care and divert ambulatory services. In doing so, we can save an average cost of $92,408 per ICU admission. At these consumption sites, trained medical staff can intervene as soon as possible, decreasing risk of death and further medical complications. Costs of ICU visits and following medical treatments for individuals addicted to opioids impact all taxpayers and continue to place excessive burden on our healthcare system.

Researchers are heartened by the data from an undisclosed safer drug consumption facility in the U.S. In its first two years of operations, more than 100 people have injected drugs at the site, amounting to about 2,754 supervised injections. Of the people surveyed at the site, 90% said they would have otherwise injected in public restrooms, streets, parks, or parking lots if the site was not available. Physicians and community members are tired of seeing people die from preventable causes. With safer drug consumption sites, we can focus on saving people’s lives, providing individuals with medical services, and referring people to treatment.
Massachusetts can continue to be a national healthcare leader by implementing novel harm reduction tactics for people addicted to opioids. Bill S.1081 will build upon the state’s legacy of progressive healthcare policies, protect vulnerable populations, and strengthen communities. It is for these reasons that we urge you and your colleagues to vote favorably on S.1081. This legislation takes a bold step forward toward ending the opioid epidemic, which impacts not only our healthcare system and workforce productivity, but also people’s relationships with one another and our communities overall. With safer drug consumption sites, we will have yet another tool to combat complications related to opioid use and save people’s lives.

Letter to the Legislator

We are writing today to urge you to support Bill S.1081, which will implement safer drug consumption sites and provide honest and hardworking Massachusetts citizens suffering from substance use disorders access to medical care, clean needle exchanges, and referrals to treatment. We are concerned about the health and wellbeing of citizens within Middlesex County and Waltham. According to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Middlesex County has seen 1,614 opioid-related deaths, 238 of which were recorded in 2014 alone. Within Waltham, there were 19 deaths between January 2012 and December 2014. These deaths are too often preventable, if only people could access necessary medical and counseling services.

People who use drugs can look like you or me – they are spouses, parents, and young people who were introduced to addictive drugs by poor prescription practices or by people they know. People who are addicted to opioids use because they physically feel sick without them. They often consume drugs in public places, including bathrooms and alleyways, and engage in clandestine practices to hide from law enforcement. As a result, users are susceptible to infections and overdoses and cannot get to medical services. The reality of the issue is that many individuals who suffer from opioid addiction are not ready to stop using drugs, cannot access treatment due to social or financial barriers, and are often marginalized for their drug use.

For these reasons, Massachusetts needs facilities where people can safely use drugs under supervised medical care, receive counseling to discuss future treatment options, and have access to clean needles to prevent HIV and other infectious diseases. Safer drug consumption sites are already in practice in over 60 cities worldwide and at an undisclosed U.S. location. This undisclosed safer drug consumption site in the United States has not seen increased drug use or crimes rates. It has, instead, saved people who otherwise would have overdosed in secret and promoted safe syringe disposal, keeping drug paraphernalia off the streets. Massachusetts can be the first to establish safer drug consumption programs in the country and maintain its status as a national leader in healthcare.

We strongly hope you support Bill S.1081 and essential harm reduction measures for your constituents and our citizens to prevent unnecessary deaths and strengthen our communities. Please talk to a member of the Joint Committee on Mental Health, Substance Use, and Recovery to vote this bill out favorably. Thank you for considering our viewpoint on the matter.

Excerpts from Campaign Journals

Sharon

Meeting with Boston Health Care for the Homeless Development Assistant Madeline Burns

Madeline gave us an introduction to BHCHP and SPOT in the lobby and then kindly took us on a tour of the entire building. She talked through the operations, services offered, key people in the organization, and more. The tour provided a very intimate and thorough understanding of BHCHP, which I was very grateful for. It helped put into context the impact the center has on the homeless population. One of the things I found most interesting was that they offered in-patient care for housing unstable individuals deemed “too sick for the streets, but not sick enough for the hospital,” such as those recovering from surgery. Services such as running water, pre- and post-operative care, and palliative care are essential for people in recovery. It was evident that BHCHP supports homeless individuals in a variety of ways.

After the tour, we returned to the lobby to speak more about SPOT. In the center, SPOT is located on the first floor, near the waiting area and pharmacy. To make room for the monitoring facility, a conference room was converted. The program has seen great successes and engaged many people. In its first four months of operation, SPOT has cared for nearly 200 individuals in over 800 different encounters, so there is a demonstrated need for and use of the facility.

During our conversation, Madeline shared that there is a lack of support from city and state government despite the hallmarks of the program. For example, city officials asked SPOT to extend their hours to late nights and weekends – which they have done – without providing monetary support. The demand for service at SPOT also outstrips the supply. There needs to be more specialized staff members and a bigger space to accommodate the monitoring of more drug users, but BHCHP does not want to bear the burden without financial support from city and state government.
Robin

*Safe Injection Facility Town Hall*

Sharon and I were invited to this meeting by Quinn Diaz, Senator Brownsberger’s Outreach Director. Speakers included Carl Sciortino from the AIDS Action committee, Northwestern District Attorney, David Sullivan; former director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy under the Obama administration, Michael Botticelli; Associate Professor of Epidemiology at the Brown University School of Public Health, Dr. Brandon Marshall; Dr. Mark Eisenberg of Massachusetts General Hospital; and Aubri Esters from SIFMA Now. This panel thoroughly discussed the outcomes of a 2003 study about a Vancouver supervised injection facility, called “INSITE.” Here, they described all the benefits of SIFs and how these benefits could translate to Massachusetts.

One major benefit discussed at the panel was how those who use drugs recreationally, can use these facilities to test to make sure that their drugs are not laced with an additional, more addictive drug (like fentanyl). Finally, the panel discussed how they must move forward to convince local law officials and police about the benefits of SIFs. The town hall lasted less than an hour. While I enjoyed how they discussed the INSITE program, they spent far too much time on it and not enough discussing how to launch a SIF in Massachusetts. After the panel, Sharon and I spoke to members from SIFMA Now and the AIDS Action committee.

**Updates**

As of May 7, 2018, the bill has been sent to study. See S.2508.

**For more information**

*View the bill:*
malegislature.gov/Bills/190/S1081

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