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

Norbert Weissberg and Judith Schneider at “Present and Defend: Projects from Advocacy for Policy Change,” April 2011.
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Advocacy for Policy Change: Brandeis students work to reform Massachusetts law
In its third year, “Advocacy for Policy Change” (LGLS 161b) continued its growth. Strong student interest was reflected in another group of high-quality applicants for the course, yielding an exceptional cohort dedicated to the creation of a just society through legislative advocacy on such issues as foreclosure, immigration, and access to health care. The course benefitted from the dedication of two exceptional teaching assistants from the Heller School for Social Policy and Management, Melissa Ross and Andrew Hart; and the logistical, financial, and intellectual support of both the International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life and the Legal Studies Program at Brandeis University.

“Advocacy for Policy Change” combines an investigation of the ethical dilemmas that arise in the process of lawmaking with hands-on advocacy work. Students are encouraged to think deeply about the complexities of shaping laws for constituents who hold diverse viewpoints about what is right and good for society and how to best progress through the legislative process. Students choose to focus on an existing law they feel could be credibly challenged on ethical or moral grounds, or a proposed law that is being promoted to redress perceived wrongs.

Working in teams, the students research their chosen issues and design and implement models of legislative advocacy. Each team is mentored by a state legislator and/or a member of an advocacy organization, who help them understand the lawmaking process, connect with colleagues, and set realistic goals.

Each student completes a series of assignments related to their project, in formats relevant to advocacy work, such as an “elevator speech” and a short video. (The full list of assignments is on page 5.) What follows in this book are excerpts from these assignments from each project, updates on the bills and budgetary line items, and links to more information on the relevant issues or organizations.

Once again I must thank several people whose support over the past three years has been invaluable. This course would not exist without the ongoing support of Professor Richard Gaskins, my mentor and the Director of the Legal Studies Program. He and Daniel Terris, Director of the International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life, took the kernel of a unique idea and made it a reality. Massachusetts State Representative and Brandeis alum Jay Kaufman ’68, MA ’73, and Judy Meredith, Director of the Massachusetts Policy and Organizing Leadership Academy and longtime advocate, helped me to create a course worthy of Brandeis University.

This course is part of the Advocacy for Policy Change initiative, designed to encourage citizens to bring moral and ethical insights to the legislative process. This initiative is supported by generous multi-year commitments from
International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life International Advisory Board member Norbert Weissberg and his wife, former Board member Judith Schneider, to whom the students and I are very grateful. For more about this initiative, see brandeis.edu/ethics/atbrandeis/advocacy.

“Advocacy for Policy Change” has generated considerable excitement at Brandeis University, where students are committed to combining academic pursuits with hands-on work. In three years, this course and this initiative have become integral parts of the Brandeis commitment to social justice. As we prepare for its fourth year our expectations are high for its continued development and achievement.

Melissa Stimell
Associate Professor of the Practice in Legal Studies
Director of Internships, Legal Studies Program
Internship Coordinator, Social Justice and Social Policy Program

Massachusetts State Representative Jay Kaufman ’68, MA ’73, (back row, at right) hosting the students of “Advocacy for Policy Change” at the Massachusetts State House, February 14, 2012.
Required Project Components

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 2012. The assignments were designed to develop and demonstrate the students’ understanding of the issues and the advocacy process.

**Storybook Assignment**
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 their stories.

**Research Report**
The research report is an in-depth document containing facts and analysis of the bill or budget item studied.

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

**Script for an In-Depth Meeting with House Ways and Means Staff**
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 a “media mash-up” to present their issues through video.

**Final Oral Presentation: “Present and Defend”**
Bringing everything together, on Friday, April 27th, 2012, students gave 15-20 minute oral presentations of their legislative advocacy projects.
Losing one’s home is a painful and terrifying experience that over 10,000 Massachusetts residents have faced in the past five years alone. Senate Bill 673 mandates mediation with judicial review for all home foreclosure cases.

**The Bill**

Bill S.673: “Mandatory Foreclosure Mediation with Judicial Review”

**Elevator Speech**

Massachusetts is built on the strength and stability of its communities; however, the increasing high number of home foreclosures is threatening our foundation. Senate Bill 673 has the power to thwart this problem and drastically reduce the number of families damaged by home foreclosure. Fewer foreclosures means fewer vacancies, less crime, fewer homeless families, and increased tax revenue that will boost our economy. Additionally, banks will be more likely to receive payment through re-negotiation as mediation creates a platform for both parties interests to be heard and honestly evaluated. Families would be able to stay in their homes, banks will continue to thrive, and our communities will be restored. Can I count on you to support mediation and urge your representative to vote favorably for this bill?

**Op-Ed**

The No-Brainer That is Mandatory Mediation

You just lost your home. And there's nothing you can do about it. Well, that's not entirely true: you can sit down with your bank or mortgage lender and try to negotiate new payment terms that will keep you and your family in your home instead of on the street. But here's the catch: your bank doesn't actually have to talk to you. They can send you from one department to another, never giving you any real answers or options, or they can simply ignore you altogether. And if you are one of the few lucky enough to get a sit-down with the bank, there's nothing that says they have to play fair and nothing to ensure they make a good faith effort to reach some sort of agreement.

Kelsey Dean ’14 and Adrienne Karlovsky ’12
The number of families that have already lost their homes because of their bank's unwillingness to renegete is growing, almost as fast as the number of foreclosures in Massachusetts. Once these families are forced out on their homes, their communities are left to deal with the negative repercussions. Vacant homes drag down the values of their neighbors' properties and lead to a significant rise in crime.

Granted I'm not an expert, but it seems to me that ripping families out of their homes, watching their neighbor's housing values and safety plummet is a pretty backwards way to deal with the foreclosure crisis. What we could use more of is common sense and a little bit of compromise.

Lucky for Massachusetts, there is currently a bill in the works that has the potential to change all of this. Senate Bill 673 will not only require banks to work with homeowners in renegotiation efforts, but will establish the Massachusetts Foreclosure Mediation Program, which will provide neutral third party mediators upon request. Other New England cities have enacted similar programs, with positive responses and an astounding 62% decrease in foreclosures for those who utilized the mediation program.

Considering the amount of money banks lose when they need to try and resell a foreclosed home, which typically sells for 22% less than what it's worth, and even the general cost to foreclose, it stands to reason that everyone – families, neighbors, communities, local governments and banks – stands to benefit from Senate Bill 673 and reduced foreclosures. This bill will add no time to the current foreclosure process; in fact it will shorten it in most cases. It will be paid for with current foreclosure fees, and costs the state and taxpayers nothing except some initial lost revenue, a minimal cost when compared to all the money the state loses from even one foreclosure.

The greatest impact would probably be seen in the banking institutions, which may need to hire more people to cover the additional hours that mandatory mediation would add to their business plan. But let's face it, too many jobs isn't exactly an issue we need to manage right now, is it? What we should be doing is working to pass Massachusetts Senate Bill 673 and instating the mandatory mediation program that will cost taxpayers little to nothing. The whole thing looks fairly win-win to me, but again, I'm no expert. For all I know common sense and general human decency could mean absolutely nothing when it comes to economics.

**Speech to Ways and Means**

Mary Gallagher lived in her home in Randolph for over 15 years, supporting her father, brother, and autistic son under one roof. Unfortunately, 2 years ago in the economic downturn, she lost her job and could no longer afford her mortgage. She, like thousands of other residents whose houses entered foreclosure, desperately tried to contact her bank to re-negotiate a payment plan, but was utterly ignored. Since 2005, over 10,000 households have had to try and navigate through this heartbreaking process in Massachusetts alone. But the crisis does not just affect those facing foreclosure, the economic repercussions of foreclosure cost us all, whether it be through increase crime due to vacant houses, or decreased property values and tax revenue. Simon Samuels with the Harvard Legal Aid Bureau estimates that “Boston taxpayers lose $20,723 to $32,053 per vacancy; Boston crime victims lose $12,813; and, Boston homeowners lose $157,058 to $1,028,862”.

Grace Ross reports that the high number of foreclosures is the biggest factor holding back overall economic recovery in Massachusetts.

However, we can fix this problem and curtail home foreclosures through enacting this bill that gives homeowners the tool of mediation with judicial review. This bill would establish the Massachusetts Mediators Foreclosure Program to train mediators, and require banks to inform homeowners of their right to mediation months before foreclosure. In these mediations, the homeowner would have an opportunity to negotiate loan modification or principal reduction, hopefully resulting in a solution that allows them to stay in their home. Most importantly, these mediations provide a platform for communication and cooperation of both the bank and the homeowner to develop a win-win solution.

Contrary to common belief, foreclosures are not in the interest of the banks. Foreclosures lead to home auctions, which frequently result in a house that sells far below its market value. Filing for foreclosure comes with a cost, and it has become clear that banks would benefit from mediation as well. Moreover, the mediation process is required to occur within 120 days, therefore, this procedure would take no longer than the current foreclosure process, and in some cases could resolve itself even quicker, reestablishing mortgage payments much sooner than a bank would see money from a home auction.

The cost to establish this program will not come out of the federal budget, and will not be a burden on taxpayers. The bill stipulates that the cost of the mediation program will be funded by the fees for foreclosure as well as by the participants themselves, although the mortgagor will not have to pay more than 15%. Therefore, as the House
Ways and Means Committee, you do not have to worry about sacrificing a part of the state budget to allocate for this program. In fact, by favorably responding to this bill, you would be generating revenue for the state, as similar programs in other states typically stop 50%-75% of foreclosures from occurring. This means that property values and tax revenue in our communities would both increase. Additionally, fewer foreclosures means fewer vacant houses encouraging crime and fewer homeless families the state must support.

Outrage with the manipulative and exploitative behavior of our banks is a commonly shared feeling among many residents, and this bill would give the common man a tool to assert themselves against predatory lenders. Enacting this legislation would prove to constituents that you understand their concerns and values and are willing to act on their behalf, rather than continuing to allow the status quo to take advantage of citizens and allow big business to control government.

This bill is about improving the well being of every community in Massachusetts, and providing an opportunity for citizens to pull themselves up by their bootstraps. You can directly assist thousands of constituents and save thousands of people from being kicked out of their homes, all while generating revenue for the rest of the state. Vote yes for Foreclosure Mediation with Judicial Review, S.673.

Excerpt from Campaign Journals

Adrienne

Meeting with Vita Urbana/City Life:
This meeting was probably the most eye-opening. While it didn’t directly deal with our specific bill, it really gave us a chance to see what we were fighting for. The number of people I/we spoke to resulted in a number of stories and an opportunity to make connections with people who were handling foreclosure and dealing with banks first hand. We drove to a meeting center in Jamaica Plain and got to the meeting a little after it’d started. There were maybe 30 people in attendance, which we were told was a low turnout (they had more people at a protest at a bank). They went around and introduced themselves, each one telling their story about foreclosure and how they were struggling to stay in their homes and deal with their banks and lenders. For me it really got ‘real’ with people started talking about the experiences they’d had with the bank that I use. I wouldn’t say it hit home for me, just because foreclosure is something I’m lucky enough to not even be able to imagine, but it became a little more personal. Granted I don’t have a home loan, and the student loans that I have through my bank are significantly less than they would be on a mortgage, but its still a little jarring to hear the problems people are having with the same banking institution that I use every day.

While at the meeting we got a chance to interview a few people, one who was fighting foreclosure, and another one who was leading the meeting. We found out during the interview that she’d been foreclosed on too, but back in ’06 when she didn’t have a coalition for support, and it was interesting to hear the differences in the foreclosure process between 2006 and now. We used both of their stories in our video presentation, and got more personal stories at the meeting than we even imagined.

■ Update

As of June 27, 2012 the Joint Committee on the Judiciary was scheduled to respond on S.673. The bill has not yet been voted favorably out of committee.

For more information

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
http://www.malegislature.gov/Bills/187/Senate/S00673

Massachusetts Alliance Against Predatory Lending: http://maapl.info/legislation
The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has estimated that there are nearly 6,000 high school students who are currently homeless and on their own in Massachusetts. House Bill 3838, An Act Providing Housing and Support Services for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth, seeks to ultimately reduce youth homelessness and its effects through a continuum of housing and support services that are geared particularly toward youths aged 22 or younger.

### The Bill

Bill H.3838: “An Act Providing Housing and Support Services for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth”

### Elevator Speech

Excuse me Representative [Name]? How do you think your constituents would feel if their children were forced into homelessness because our state wasn’t able to provide services that gave their kids basic housing? Our state’s department of education estimates that we have over 6,000 high school youth who are homeless or on their own, not including those who dropped out before hand. Many students are living on the streets, dropping out of school and becoming stuck in an environment that exposes them to violence, drugs and poor health. If the Homeless Youth Act were to be passed, we could create more housing and support services to ensure that our youth (specifically between the ages of 18 and 22) aren’t slipping through the cracks, or missing out on their rights to an education. The passage of this bill would show a commitment by the state and yourself to our youth’s well-being and future. We urge you to support this act and call Brian Dempsey, the chair of the House Ways and Means Committee. Tell him to make sure the Homeless Youth Act moves forward favorably out of the committee. It takes a village to raise a child; please make sure Massachusetts makes that commitment.
Meeting with the House Ways and Means Legislative Staff

Today, we have youth (children of your constituents) resorting to being homeless, because we cannot provide enough services to promise them housing and an education.

Our state’s Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has estimated that over 6,000 high school students are currently homeless and on their own. Though official, this number is not accurate because it does not include the estimated thousands of students who have dropped out of school along the way. Our youth, unaccompanied by a parent or guardian, who in some cases is unable or unwilling to provide shelter and care, are struggling. They are being exposed to violence, drugs and situations which can affect their personal health and well-being. This environment, which we haven’t been able to prevent, is perpetuating a cycle of dependence on public systems and benefits for our homeless youth.

While our state has an extensive network of emergency services, transitional programs and shelters created to combat homelessness, our system is not designed to meet the needs of our youth population. Teens are being phased out of our foster system when they are 18, but there is nothing to adjust them to the adult environment we expect them to inhabit.

The power to act is sitting in this committee. House Bill 3838, An Act Providing Housing and Support Services for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth, seeks to ultimately reduce youth homelessness and its effects through a continuum of housing and support services that are geared particularly towards youths aged 22 or younger.

The bill establishes a state-funded program under the Executive Office of Health and Human Services whereby the office will create contracts with various agencies to provide housing and support services targeted at the needs of unaccompanied homeless youth. A new line item will fund programs that provide a “continuum of housing options for this population, in conjunction with wraparound support services. These services will be formatted to address the needs of homeless youth, and may include emergency shelter, kinship home placements, short term housing and programs that help in the transition to independent living.”

We understand the need to consider the budget and finances necessary to make this bill a reality. You might argue that it is futile to funnel funds towards a population which has demonstrated a repeated characteristic of falling through or not contributing to society. However, we caution you not to think in the spectrum of the services currently in place. As we mentioned before, the services currently in place are not geared towards homeless youth. They are not geared towards the ages similar to that of the teenagers your constituents have in their homes.

This bill invests in the future of our youth. It shows a commitment by yourselves to inspire our children, and allow them to grow to be capable and efficient contributors to society. This investment will yield you a profit. Our children will be able to return to school based off of the passing of this act, and they will later pay back that debt through their own productive engagement in society as adults.

We request that you evaluate this act, reach out to other agencies to help you finance it, but most importantly, please demonstrate your commitment to our children by approving this act for the next step in the legislative process. No one believes this is the wrong thing to do. Your job is to decide how to do it, and we support this bill in one form or another. It takes a village to raise a child, please uphold your commitment so that our peers don’t have to live in the streets.

Excerpts from Campaign Journals

Kelly

Legislative Action Day

On February 29 I attended the legislative action day for the Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless at the Massachusetts State House. I was able to volunteer for the entire event, first helping with check-in and registration and later helping to hand out information to legislators. During the event Kelly spoke about the Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless’ Budget and Bill priorities. After Kelly spoke the coalition presented a video project that detailed the issue of youth homelessness. Finally there was a speaker panel that consisted of Representative James O’Day, a Reverend, and the program manager of the agency Youth on Fire. After the speeches the audience was able to speak and ask questions about the issues, bills, and budget priorities. I was able to hear during this time from many homeless youth who wanted to tell their story. The event was extremely informative and interesting as I heard more about the bill through actual homeless youth and legislators. After the final announcements the coalition organized packets of information on their bill priorities and tips on talking to legislators and encouraged the audience to either drop their information off or talk personally with their legislators. I was able to take the packets of information that audience members hadn’t brought to legislators to them myself. Many of the legislators were not available so I simply dropped off the
information with an aide but I was able to speak briefly with many legislators about our bill. I quickly explained what the bill was, where it was, and why it deserved support. By the end of the action day all of the packets were dropped off and many had met personally with legislators. This event was the most involved I was able to be in advocating for the bill. It was extremely satisfying to know that I helped personally to raise awareness of the bill and get it on the radar of legislators. I was also able to meet many other advocates for the bill from various Massachusetts agency. Overall the event was a really positive experience and my only complaint would be that I wish I could have met with more legislators for a longer period of time.

Herbie
Meeting with Rep. James O’Day’s Aide, Robert Lyons
During our second trip to the State House, I went to Representative O’Day’s office. I was somewhat lost in the process of advocating for my bill. I had completed all of the assignments, but that hadn’t given me a clear-cut path to follow as to what I should be doing next. I was feeling rather helpless at the time. I didn’t think I could be much help to the effort of getting my bill passed.

This was truly my first experience at walking into a state legislator’s office. Last visit we had toured the State House, which while fun and interesting, it did not provide me with much chance to get acquainted with the politicians discussing my bill. I was nervous as heck when I walked into O’Day’s office. I was so anxious that I accidentally walked into the wrong office. After sternly being corrected, I arrived in O’Day’s reception area. Of course I hadn’t been planning on actually meeting him; I just wanted one of his aides to tell me how I could be helpful.

A young man walked out and introduced himself as Robert Lyons. He was barely older than I was, but he seemed to have years of experience. He explained that he got the position in O’Day’s office right after college graduation, and he assured me that he was as knowledgeable as O’Day was on the progress of the bill. He kept on inquiring on who I was, and I kind of hid behind my position of Student Union President. I felt that this title might save me some awkward or what I perceived as awkward explanations of what I was doing here. And I didn’t want to appear as a student just working on a project.

Well my approach worked. Robert was very interested to hear how much I knew about the bill. So I explained everything, for as long as I could. I think he was happy with my degree of understanding. I finally got to the point where I looked up and said, “Hey, I really care about this, but I have no idea how a student here at Brandeis can help you. Unless you want me to put up flyers, my partner and I aren’t sure how to proceed.”

At that point Robert kind of shook his head and shrugged. He had been really helpful correcting any facts I got wrong, but he couldn’t give me a course of action. So I fell back onto an idea I had been forming during class.

“What if,” I said, “What if I rallied the Student Government Presidents around Boston to help raise awareness for this bill?” He seemed to like that. After all, there really wasn’t much any student could do because the bill was locked into the House Ways & Means Committee. But Robbie thought a bunch of Student Government Presidents and their constituents calling Brian Dempsey [chair of House Ways & Means] could start getting a message across. It made sense that college students would want to advocate on behalf of others near their age.

So my first official task was to round up student leaders from around Boston, and get them to agree to all call Brian Dempsey’s office on the exact same day sometime next week. We were supposed to start and mobilize students!

Update
As of August 17, 2012, House Bill 3838, the Homeless Youth Act has not yet been voted favorably out of the House Ways and Means Committee.

For more information
Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless
In the current economy, foreclosures are a crisis in all states. This issue is particularly serious in Massachusetts as the state lacks the standard regulatory laws of other states, like mandated mediation and aid. Thousands of families are evicted every year, but their homes are left unused. In actuality, those homes would prove more economically beneficial to both the banks and the homeless families if they were allowed to continue to live in their homes and pay rent. Senate Bill 767 would encourage banks to halt unfair lending practices and would open up a new world of judicial action that will result in economic and social recovery.

The Bill
Bill S.767: “Preventing Unnecessary and Costly Vacancies in Massachusetts”

Elevator Speech
We have an opportunity to save our communities from social and economic collapse. Foreclosures are creating thousands of empty houses and homeless families. Bill S.767, an act to prevent unnecessary vacancies, will give former owners the right to rent their homes post-foreclosure. It will improve the general quality of life, community bonds and property values of Massachusetts residents. This bill will save both homeowners and banks hundreds of thousands of dollars and will restore safe communities to their former glory. It’s your civic duty to put it into practice and help the public. Will you ask the Judicial Committee members to allow it to pass?

Excerpt from Campaign Journal
The more important of the two coalition meetings I attended was the BTA [Bank Tenants Association] meeting held in late March in Springfield MA. The BTA is a part of MAAPL [Massachusetts’ Association Against Predatory Lending] and is the leading movement for the local low-income homeowners in Springfield. This meeting was one of their weekly meetings to discuss future plans.

Ryan Winston ’13
At this meeting, I was pleasantly surprised to note that the speaker, Malcolm Chu, already knew about the mediation and vacancy prevention bills going through the House and Senate and was aware that they would be discussed in early April. The meeting started with Malcolm explaining that in a few weeks, two weeks after that meeting, they would be discussing changes in their organization based on results of the bills being passed, if they were indeed successful.

The next part of the meeting was spent sharing stories of new people who had never been there before. Some testimony was given and when they were finished speaking, they were directed to legal aides in the back of the room who were trying to help everyone, though they seemed understaffed. When I went to talk to a legal aide after the meeting, she explained how most of what they were doing at the meeting was helping the tenants understand their rights.

For the second meeting (for my line item, 7004-0102: Homeless Individuals’ Assistance) I was able to meet with Joan Whitaker, part of the staff of First Church shelter in Cambridge MA. She handles all the financial work that is necessary to keep the shelter running and has a long background in social-economic activism. She is a supporter of increased funding for the line item, particularly given how much paperwork she needs to go through to get money from the state. The funds, in her opinion, aren’t nearly enough to fill the need of all the shelters in Massachusetts and the splitting of money to various line items is increasing the amount of time spent on financials.

I didn’t get to speak to her for very long so to summarize my meeting with her, she is pro-additional funding. However, she didn’t agree with funding being cut from the family services, as First Church also serves them and she felt the state could afford more money for the homeless. As it was, the Church was using supplementary funds out of their own metaphorical pockets to provide a comfortable living environment even just in the church’s basement for the homeless to stay each night.

I concur with her point of view. The amount of money being spread over many line items should be going towards making it easier to procure funds from the state so that less privileged shelters can afford to continue providing services. If you compare state funding to non-profits, it’s obvious that the non-profits have an advantage in funds. The Edinburg Center which also deals with the homeless, but mostly the disabled homeless, is a 4-acre center with multiple coalitions backing it and using gigantic fundraisers to ensure a fantastic staff. Just last year they had a golfing event raise $122,000 for the center. By comparison, First Church only receives a monthly stipend of a few thousand from the state.

### Update

The Senate concurred on this bill on July 19, 2012. As of July 31 the bill has been sent for a Judiciary House Study Order.

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The fate of those convicted of a crime inspires little sympathy in the average citizen. Though convicted felons may be guilty of violating not only laws but societal norms, any legislation that results in harsher punishment for the citizens of Massachusetts deserves careful examination. The proposed three strikes law is likely to produce several detrimental effects, including a costly burden on the Department of Corrections and erosion of the autonomy of the judges in our courts, and it will not result in an improvement in public safety. For these reasons, and many others, the students have deduced that the proposed three strikes law is not the most appropriate action to curb violent crime.

The Bill

Bill H.3818: “An Act relative to sentencing and improving law enforcement tools”

Elevator Speech

We all value public safety and the prevention of crime, especially violent crime. So, when a member of our community breaks the law, we believe it is fair to punish that person in proportion to the crime committed.

Reducing violent crime has been the justification for the “three strikes” law currently in conference committee. However, this law is poor public policy. Academic research from the 25 other states with three strikes laws proves that this type of law is ineffective. Three strikes has been shown to do nothing to reduce violent crime. What it will result in is disproportionate sentencing for more minor crimes that should not be included in the law. Crimes like assault and battery, which does not even require any physical harm to occur, do not rise to the level of the most violent crimes.

Instead of implementing ineffective policies to reduce crime, let’s develop workable solutions. Let’s keep Massachusetts in the lead, not hanging on to ideas that have already been proven wrong. Will you agree to contact your legislators and ask them to pressure members of the conference committee to adopt a reduced list of felonies in the three strikes law?
Excerpts from Campaign Journals

Lina

The first meeting I ever attended about the 3-strikes bill was an EPOCA (Ex-Prisoners and Prisoners Organizing for Community Advancement) meeting that was held in Worcester on February 15, 2012. This was such an interesting experience for me since it was my first time attending any meeting about advocacy. Even though I was born and raised in Worcester, going to this event didn’t feel like I was going home. It was very much out of my comfort element when in my hometown.

What I remember most about the meeting was listening to the passion in everyone’s voices. The meeting consisted of five speakers, all with different viewpoints and ideas based on their careers and interests. This is where we met Jaime Ayers, a mother who would have been a victim of the three-strikes law had it been severely enforced; Ben Thompson, the executive director of Criminal Justice Policy Coalition; and Tatum Pritchard, an attorney with Prisoners’ Legal Services. From these three people, we were able to get three different outlooks on the habitual offender bill. From Jaime, we heard an emotional story that proved that there are other ways to help people than putting them in jail longer. From Mr. Thompson, we learned about the policy side of the bill, and how other states, such as California are faring after having their habitual offender bill in place for a few years. Finally, Ms. Pritchard described how the law works, what the actual text of the bill means, and what it would do for our legal services in Massachusetts.

With such a variation of viewpoints, people still learning about the bill, such as myself, and people who were already passionate about the cause were able to come together and develop a better understanding of what this bill means to the Commonwealth, how much it will cost, and what some of the consequences are expected to be based on the results in other states.

After hearing from these speakers and other panelists, the audience was allowed to ask questions, where you could see how involved and excited everyone was for the cause.

For me, attending to this meeting and hearing about other people’s experiences made my contribution that much more important, and the cause real. This is when it changed from being a class project to something that actually matters for me. I was very glad that I was able to make this meeting, because it showed me how many people were involved in getting this bill stopped. Before this meeting, I had the sense that a lot of organizations were involved and that the cause was important for a lot of people, but it wasn’t until I heard them in person – not on the computer screen, not through reading stories about ex-offenders in emails – I felt a connection and understood more about where they were coming from.

Clair

On April 3, 2012, Lina and I met with Senator Susan Fargo in her office at the State House, and had the opportunity to speak with her about the three strikes portion of the crime bill. Her Special Assistant recognized us from our first State House visit, during which we spoke with him about our position on the issue. This time, we sat down with Senator Fargo and one of her aides, who had read our research report. We attempted to advocate for a narrower list of felonies to be included in the law, and she appeared to agree on the issue and said at least one progressive member of the Committee appeared to as well. She was not willing to become an advocate herself. This meeting showed the importance of trying to nail down a concrete answer about a policymaker’s willingness or unwillingness to take on the issue. While we had a lovely time chatting, I realized later that our conversation kept getting steered away from three strikes; it was challenging to bring it back to our issue. The information we gathered from this meeting included the name of the aide working in Senator Cynthia Creem’s office that could tell us when and where the public meetings of the Conference Committee were happening and some insights into the political persuasions of those on the Committee. We would have done well to ask for a more concrete answer about her support on the issue we were there to talk about.

Update

As of August 20, 2012 the bill has been signed by the Governor and is effectively law.

For more information

Analysis of S.2080 & H.3818 “Three Strikes”

Boston Workers Alliance
http://bostonworkersalliance.org/?p=1353
Schools currently depend heavily on special education instructors to manage students’ individual transition plans and services, yet current requirements of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education inadequately address this area of need. As the bill has been voted upon favorably and is in the final stages of the legislative process, the most pressing concern for Bill H.3720, now Chapter 51 of the Acts of 2012, is its implementation. Through this process the new law may greatly meet the needs of students with disabilities by helping them meet their post-secondary goals.

**The Bill**

Bill H.3720: “An Act to promote the successful transition of students with disabilities to post-secondary education, employment, and independent living” (now Chapter 51 of the Acts of 2012)

**Elevator Speech**

Think back to your high school graduation. This may have been a very exciting and stressful time because while the possibilities seemed endless, there was great uncertainty in determining how to go about achieving goals. These same uncertainties are especially heightened for those with disabilities because they do not always receive the proper guidance and training to fulfill their post-secondary plans. As you may know, students with disabilities will have greater opportunity for success if their teachers are adequately trained in providing essential transition skills. Bill H.3720, An Act to Promote the Successful Transition of Students with Disabilities to Post-Secondary Education, Employment, and Independent Living will allow teachers greater avenues to teach transitional skills to students. We would like to ask for your support in the implementation of Bill H.3720 by petitioning teachers to utilize this opportunity to continue their professional education in transition services. By working together, we can instill a greater demand among teachers to obtain valuable skills in preparing students with disabilities for successful transition into adulthood.
Excerpts from Campaign Journals

Erin
Massachusetts Advocates for Children Meeting
In this meeting, we wanted to better understand what implementation would be like for Bill H.3720, and what role an advocacy group like MAC would play in making sure that schools and families are doing what they should. We wanted to connect with them and demonstrate that we supported their work as well. We intended to speak with Julia Landau, Senior Project Director of the Disability Education Justice Initiative, as we understood her to be very knowledgeable about what an implementation process may entail for advocates and parents. However, given that she was busy at the time of our visit, we had the opportunity to speak to Tom Mela, the MAC Children’s Law Support Project Director. Mr. Mela let us briefly know what the rest of the legislative process for the bill would encompass, and that regulations would be required (and would have to be set forth by the DESE). This gave me a clearer idea of the more nitty-gritty, behind the scenes components of an implementation process for any law, but particularly a law concerning public education. Mr. Mela also challenged us with crucial questions regarding implementation of the bill, and what direction our thinking should be in: Who does what? What does sound implementation look like? These questions helped guide us throughout the semester in learning more about the implementation process for this transition bill. Mr. Mela also suggested that we could get an idea of the concerns that arose within the bill by tracking its history from the past 2-3 years, which we hoped would provide insight into the problems that the bill originally attempted to address, and how that might affect the change that the bill could potentially bring in its final form.

Haley
Interview with Dr. Susan Parish
This was a very interesting interview as it brought in a completely different perspective on parent involvement in the special education system. Up until this point, we had received mainly positive or neutral responses to the idea of parent involvement in the implementation of this Transition Coordinator Law, now called Chapter 51 of the Acts of 2012. For instance, most of my conversations with Tina from MAC, or even Seth Goldberg and Scott Lieber (legislative staff for Rep. Tom Sannicandro) had encouraged us to promote parental involvement in implementation strategies. However, when speaking with Dr. Parish, she admittedly had a rather pessimistic perspective on how realistic it is to urge parents to make change in the system. She gave a precise description of special education structure in terms of Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), and how there are federal mandates for transition planning that often are not carried out, “it falls apart at implementation.” This is due to the fact that schools usually override what a family wants for their children, and the partnership between parents and teachers is not structured the way it should be. She explained how the difficulty that parents of non-disabled children face are often difficult to overcome, so imagine how much sophisticated advocacy work is needed for parents of children with special needs to challenge administrators and special education professionals.

I thought that it was very valuable to hear a different perspective on the structure of the special education system. It reminded me that there are many different opinions on these issues, and it is important to take what she had to say with a grain of salt. I was impressed by her honesty in stating that she did not know what types of regulations would be needed for implementation of the bill, and she did advise that I contact Elizabeth Bostic, a parent of children with disabilities who teaches parents to become advocates for their children.

Update
As of March 1, 2012 the bill has been signed by the Governor and is now effectively law.

For more information
Massachusetts Advocates for Children
http://www.massadvocates.org/
Over 1.4 million Massachusetts workers have inadequate sick leave, which neither allows them to sufficiently take care of themselves, nor allows them to take care of their families. Half of these workers have no sick time at all. As a result, workers spend more time sick, businesses lose productivity, and the public health of Massachusetts suffers. An Act for Establishing Earned Paid Sick Time solves this issue by allowing workers to earn time off with which to recover from illness and by ensuring this time can also be used to care for family members in need.

■ The Bill

■ Excerpt from Storybook
Sara Ferreira is an immigrant from South Africa. She moved to the United States when she was young for the increased security it would provide. With her, she brought the conviction that you need to stand up for things that you need. Here in Massachusetts, she was shocked when she “couldn’t take a day off” without losing pay. And she says if she did, “I would worry about my boss” and how he would react the next day. She was afraid of being reprimanded or losing her job for taking care of her health.

Sara says she advocates for the Paid Sick Leave Bill because “I don’t want another family to feel the way I feel.” The issue is one of human needs: paid sick days are a basic thing the workers of Massachusetts need.

■ Elevator Speech
Job security is a value at the heart of our society, especially during these hard economic times. Everyone benefits from a healthy economy, but a healthy economy requires healthy workers. Unfortunately, 40% of Massachusetts private sector workers lack a single guaranteed sick day. Without sick days, employees cannot keep themselves healthy, and infect their coworkers, resulting in 33,000 unnecessary cases of flu costing workers and their families...
$16 million annually in lost wages and medical expenses. This also costs Massachusetts businesses $348 million in lost productivity and worker turnover. An Act Establishing Earned Paid Sick Time, H.3995, allows workers to earn time with which they can take care of themselves and their families. Will you ask House Speaker DeLeo to bring bill H.3995 to a vote on the House floor? Passing this bill supports healthy workers, and healthy workers build a healthy economy.

■ Op-ed

Do you want a bug with those fries? This is the question lawmakers should be asking themselves as they consider bill H.3995, An Act Establishing Earned Paid Sick Time, which allows workers to earn paid days off with which to take care of themselves and their families. The logic behind H.3995 is simple: if you go to work sick, you won’t be productive and will jeopardize the health of everyone with whom you come into contact—from coworkers to customers to bosses. Sick time allows people to stay home, get better, and avoid infecting their entire workplace.

This is an issue that affects all of us. Nobody wants to go to a restaurant and see a waiter coughing as they serve dinner, or arrive at work to find their coworker sneezing all over. It is difficult to prevent the spread of illness once it has entered the workplace: we get each other sick and then take it home to our families. How many times has somebody at the office given you a cold? And how productive have you been at your job with the flu? One cannot expect a workplace to be running at peak efficiency if the employees keep getting one another sick.

While this may not sound like a serious problem, the data might surprise you. Earned sick time is anticipated to prevent over 33,000 cases of flu from being spread within the workplace, per year. That amounts to a total annual savings of over $16 million for workers and their families due to fewer hospital visits and fewer missed days of work. Additionally, according to the Institute for Women’s Policy Research, earned sick time—by preventing workers from getting their coworkers and customers sick—will save employers $348 million per year. These are the savings we can achieve by giving people the opportunity to stay home and care for themselves when they are sick. Some lawmakers are afraid that providing earned sick time for workers will make Massachusetts unappealing for businesses; employers will move out of Massachusetts. As a native of Connecticut, a state that passed similar legislation, I can assure you that this fear is unfounded. Businesses in Connecticut are healthier than ever. A recent report calculates the total burden to Connecticut businesses as merely 0.05% of total sales—compared to all of the savings outlined above. San Francisco also passed similar legislation in 2006. What happened? The Institute for Women’s Policy Research reports that six out of seven San Francisco employers saw no decrease in profitability as a result of providing paid sick time.

Massachusetts’ earned sick time bill is now on the House floor. If healthy workers and businesses are important to you, then call your representative and let them know that earned sick time is something you support. Every call is important. You can also visit www.masspaidleave.org to join the Massachusetts Paid Leave Coalition and learn more about this important issue. Nobody wants a bug with their fries.

■ Excerpts from Campaign Journals

Justine

Overall, the most important thing I have learned about advocacy is the importance of coalitions and making connections with the right people. In all of the meetings I went to, the strength of communication between coalition members, and with the public, led to either the success or weakness in an event. Personal connections and coalition connections are often the ones that make the difference in attendance to rallies, talking to legislators, and making your bill move in the state house.

I think another important lesson is in timing. The MA Paid Leave Coalition spent a lot of time to figure out when their bill would be moving out of the Department of Labor and Workforce Development, so that they could appropriately time their rally day to re-invigorate support for the bill during next steps.

I had a great experience working with the MA Paid Leave Coalition this semester, and am happy that they are planning to put our video (once we can figure out how to shrink the file and send it) on their Facebook page. It is great that we have actually done something hopefully beneficial for the coalition that has let us learn about advocacy from them.

David

The first meeting I attended, with Justine, was a Paid Sick Leave regularly-scheduled coalition meeting at the Greater Boston Legal Services (GBLS) office in Boston. The people present included Elizabeth Toulan of GBLS, Mass Paid
Leave Coalition campaign assistant Anne Sheldon, Patrick Williams (aide to Senator Jehlen), an aide for Representative Kahn, and roughly ten other coalition heads. The main points of the meeting were outreach to businesses, continued grassroots campaigning, the March kick-off event, and a legislative update.

I was immediately impressed by how developed the coalition is; there were a number of people present—from legislative aides, to union representatives, to advocacy leaders—and the meeting was incredibly efficient; if I had not known better, I would have thought I was in a corporate office.

This meeting was a great example of how multi-faceted advocacy can be. While I initially thought the focus would be on grassroots advertising or directly lobbying legislators, the true political maneuvering was far more nuanced; all of the coalition actions were highly targeted and coordinated. As an example, the coalition had a detailed (and top secret) list of how the individual legislators on the Joint Committee on Labor and Workforce Development felt about paid sick leave. Based on this list, the coalition focused its grassroots efforts in the districts of the undecided legislators. The business outreach was equally targeted as a direct response to undecided legislators’ concerns. This reinforced the lesson that advocacy is not merely about being the loudest voice but, rather, being the voice which speaks to the right person at the right time with the correct message.

Video can be seen at: http://youtu.be/vDq9ueRepC8

■ Update
As of June 21, 2012 the Senate concurred on the bill. The House date was extended and will be voted upon at a later date.

For more information
http://www.masspaidleave.org/
The immigrant demographic in Massachusetts makes in-state tuition a particularly relevant issue. In 2010, it was estimated that there are 912,310 immigrants living in Massachusetts. Approximately 160,000 of these individuals are undocumented. Out of that population, it is projected that about 14,285 are children under age 18, or about 800 per school year. H.2109 would benefit not only the hundreds of students that would be affected by this legislation annually, but the entire Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

The Bill
Bill H.2109: “An Act regarding higher education opportunities for high school graduates in the commonwealth”

Elevator Speech
Massachusetts values education and access to opportunity perhaps more than any other state. However, not all of Massachusetts’ high-achieving high school students are able to attend college. Through no fault of their own, students without legal permanent residency are categorized as ‘out-of-state’ students even if they have attended a Massachusetts high school for over 3 years. This means that they must pay out-of-state tuition, which can be three to five times more expensive. Undocumented students are allowed to attend college but the high tuition rates prevent them from doing so. The inability of hundreds of students to continue their post-secondary education stunts the economic and social growth of our communities. We have already invested in their futures and helping them continue their education will keep these students out of low-income jobs. Over time, tuition costs and tax revenue from undocumented students will provide a valuable source of revenue for the Commonwealth. Education is the vehicle of progress and we cannot continue to roadblock progress in our communities. Will you publicly support Bill H.2109 and educate your staff or fellow representatives about the bill’s immense economic and civil benefits?
Excerpt from Storybook

Elaine, a high school teacher in Boston, congratulated Maya one day on her MCAS scores when Maya began crying. She told Elaine that because she was undocumented, she would not be able to take advantage of the college scholarship awarded to the highest scorers. As a public school teacher, Elaine spent her energy working to help students obtain these very goals. However, regardless of Maya's hard work, intelligence, or commitment to learning, she would not be able to attend college because she was not able to pay the tuition.

Excerpts from Campaign Journals

Victoria

Laura and I attended SIM [Student Immigrant Movement] Camp 2012 on February 25 and 26, held at UMass Boston. For two days, we learned how to advocate for the rights of undocumented students, change the education system and work to overhaul the way undocumented students are limited in their post secondary options by teachers, guidance counselors and the higher education school system in general.

I made a number of connections, particularly with the other Brandeis students that were present and with the SIM member who guided our group. There were four Brandeis students, including me and Laura, and we were able to use the breakout sessions of the conference to discuss how to effectively re-start the Brandeis Immigration Education Initiative and how to spread awareness of challenges facing undocumented students to the Brandeis community.

Beyond spreading awareness, we learned the skills to implement real actions, ranging from protests and marches to one-on-one conversations with policy makers and lobbying. After attending SIM Camp, Laura and I had an in-depth understanding of how SIM operates, what their mission is and how to go about working towards that mission. SIM Camp was designed as a way for undocumented high school students to come together and learn how to advocate for change.

It was an emotional and intense weekend full of stories, discussion and action around increasing opportunities for undocumented students. SIM Camp was an eye opening experience for me in that, through spending two days with the leaders of SIM and having continuous conversations with students, I was able to see and hear about the impact that in-state tuition would have on real individuals.

Laura

We met with Representative Denise Provost the first time we went to the State House as a class. Her aide, Mark Kennedy, was also present. We learned about the history of the in-state tuition bill and why it was having such a hard time getting passed. We learned the names of the representatives that voted against the bill. We met because Representative Provost wanted to work towards advocating more for the in-state tuition bill. She believed that SIM could push further and get the bill passed. She had just learned that the movement had decided to shift its strategy and not lobby for the bill. She spoke about the importance of continuing the struggle and pushing for the bill and hoped to change SIM’s mind. However, I strongly agreed with SIM’s decision and change in strategy and thought that Representative Provost was not being fully understanding of what the needs of SIM members were. There is great value in grassroots movements; lobbying for the bill was going to lead to another majority of votes against it.

We made a connection with Representative Provost, keeping in contact regularly with her aide, Mark. He was very helpful in answering our questions and giving us resources with important data on undocumented students. From this data we learned how economically beneficial in-state tuition is to the state.

The meeting went pretty well because it was informative and we got an insider's tips on who or what was blocking the bill but it could have been more productive if Representative Provost had accepted SIM’s decision to no longer lobby for the bill.

Update

As of August 20, 2012 the bill died in the Joint Committee on Higher Education. Its sponsor, Representative Denise Provost, plans on reintroducing it in the next legislative session.

For more information

Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition
Although Massachusetts has been a model for both federal health reform and other state health reform efforts, there continue to be issues with permanently insuring residents. Many people receiving benefits through the public programs MassHealth and Commonwealth Care lose their coverage despite remaining eligible for benefits. The obstacle that affects most people is the complexity of the insurance renewal process. H.3984: Continuity of Care for Children and their Eligible Parents will ensure that children won’t be denied care due to cost or other administrative obstacles.

*The Bill*

Bill H.3984: “The Continuity of Care for Children and their Eligible Parents”

*Excerpt from Storybook*

Who’s affected? Children, Parents, Families

After losing MassHealth coverage Carol was unable to purchase ADHD medication for her 12-year-old daughter. Her child experienced behavioral difficulties prompting her school to file a Child in Need of Services; costing the state thousands in legal fees.

Jodie incurred over $1,000 dollars in medical bills after learning her 1-year-old son Carlos was no longer insured. She no longer had insurance because MassHealth claimed they did not receive her renewal forms.

Rachel and her two children ages 4 and 7 visited a doctor’s office. Upon arrival they discovered they were no longer covered by MassHealth and had to go home instead of receiving care.

*Rachel and her two children ages 4 and 7 visited a doctor’s office. Upon arrival they discovered they were no longer covered by MassHealth and had to go home instead of receiving care.*
uncompensated care costs a year, which puts a financial burden on both the state as well as vulnerable families.

This problem can be solved with implementation of H.3984: Continuity of Care for Children.

This bill erases the 67% of MassHealth renewal issues which resulted in lost coverage due to complicated paperwork.

This bill will not cost the state any more money and will guarantee that every child has the healthy start they deserve.

[If speaking to legislator] Recommend your colleagues in the Ways and Means Committee to approve the bill.

[if speaking with constituent] We would appreciate it if you would contact your legislator and advise them to support this bill.

Excerpts from Campaign Journals

Hilary

The third time we visited the State House for me, was definitely the most eye-opening experience. That day, we had gone to lobby our line item or bill. I chose at first to lobby my line item on Pediatric Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners but realized that without a fact sheet my efforts would yield little success. I decided it would be better to lobby my bill because I was more knowledgeable and had a fact sheet with me that day. After speaking with Dayanne that week, we were informed that the bill was currently in committee at the Joint Committee on Health Care financing. I went down to Senator Kaufman’s office to make copies of my fact sheet and then went up to find the Health Care Financing office. I entered the office and asked the secretary if I could speak with Representative Steven M. Walsh, the committee chair to discuss H.83, the Continuity of Care bill. She gave me a face and asked which organization I was with. I told her I was from the Children's Health Access Coalition with Health Care For All. She proceeded to scan her computer to see if the bill was in committee. She was short with me explaining that it was not there. I had explained to her that the bill had been rewritten and that it could be in committee under a different name. She told me sharply to return when I had the accurate name of the bill and sent me out. I was very embarrassed and discouraged. It had not occurred to me or any other members of the coalition that the bill would be under a different name because of the re-write.

I then texted Aaron to look at the email Dayanne had sent us about the location at the bill and at the bottom the bill was referred to as HB.3984. I went back in and the secretary rolled her eyes and got a legislative aide to Rep. Walsh. I went through my elevator speech handed over my outdated factsheet and then left.

What was most interesting about my experience that day was my realization of how confusing and ambiguous the legislative process can be. I thought it was strange for a health care advocacy coalition, various legislators and their secretaries, and informed advocates/lobbyists to struggle identifying where a bill is in the state house. I think that this shows how obsolete and incomprehensible the bill tracking system is. The Massachusetts legislature website only indicated the new name of the rewrite an entire month after the bill was renamed. Due to these inadequacies I was ill-informed and ineffective in my lobbying efforts that day.

Aaron

My first meeting regarding my bill was with Health Care for All, the coalition advocating for the Continuity of Care bill. Hilary and I drove into Boston to meet with Dayanne Leal who is the Children’s Health Policy and Outreach Manager for Health Care for All. We went into the meeting thinking our bill was about providing twelve months of continuous coverage for people on MassHealth. We had made up a list of questions based on that assumption. The Massachusetts legislature website had listed the bill as twelve months of continuous coverage. When we started talking to Dayanne, she informed us that our bill was no longer twelve months of continuous coverage but rather a bill to support continuity of care for children and their eligible families on MassHealth. All of our original interview questions were now worthless. We had to come up with new questions on the spot as she explained to us the new bill. She gave us the new fact sheet that wasn’t on their website or the legislature’s web site yet.

This meeting was very helpful in understanding more of how intense the process to get a bill passed was. The changes had been made to the original bill because they did not think that they would get the original bill passed. Although the original bill would benefit MassHealth beneficiaries more because it offers continuous coverage instead of ways to prevent people from losing coverage, Health Care for All thought it would be more beneficial to help with the continuity of coverage problem a little then go for it all, and lose.
Update
The bill was included as Section 267 in Bill S.2400 (An Act improving the quality of health care and reducing costs through increased transparency, efficiency and innovation) as part of the Acts of 2012 and was signed into law August 6, 2012.

For more information

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

Domestic Violence Bill

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

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

■ Excerpts from Storybook

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

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

Rebecca Miller ’13 and Marla Merchut ’12
benefits of employees taking the necessary steps to protect themselves.

**Know the Facts**

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

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

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

**A Labor Issue**

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

**Hear A Story**

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

**Op-ed Piece**

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Excerpt from Campaign Journals**

**Rebecca**

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

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

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

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

### Update
As of August 20, 2012, the bill was not scheduled for a first reading and died in the House Committee on Ways and Means. It can be reintroduced in the future.
According to the Environmental Protection Agency, between 500 billion and 1 trillion plastic bags are distributed worldwide each year. The United States contributes over a billion of these, dispensing 3 million plastic bags every day. It is time for Massachusetts to follow the example others have set around the country and around the world, and respond to the dangers posed by plastic bags. Bill S.353: An Act Relative to Plastic Bag Reduction (2009), is necessary for the environmental, economic, and social well-being of the Commonwealth.

■ The Bill

■ Elevator Speech
We all want to do what’s right for the environment, but sometimes it’s too expensive or too difficult. This is not one of those times. Plastic bags take a needless toll on the planet, and every day we sit idle is a death sentence for over 2.7 million animals. These bags cannot be digested and do not break down on their own for 300-1,000 years. This means that the pieces of one plastic bag can kill countless animals. These bags are not necessary, and yet the US produces over 100 billion of them each year. Over 90% of these are distributed by large businesses.

It is time to make the right choice, and ban these bags in Massachusetts. Bill H.1990 would require large businesses to distribute only reusable or biodegradable bags. This is a simple change that would have a monumental impact. You can make a difference in the lives of billions and make Massachusetts a leader by pushing for a vote on bill H.1990 to move it out of the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture and into the House Ways and Means Committee. Animal lives are at stake, and our beautiful landscapes risk being ruined for our future generations. The time to act is now.
Excerpts from Campaign Journals

Jessi

Our first coalition meeting went very well. Jesse and I Skyped with Phil Sego of the Sierra Club. Phil was passionate and well versed on the issue, and we exchanged facts and stories that could be used to grab a listener. In Phil’s experience, the ecological implications of plastic bags were significantly more useful for persuasion, because they are so much larger than the economic ones. The main reason that Phil got involved with the ban the bag movement was because of the number of migratory bird species going extinct each year as a direct result.

Even more beneficial, however, was how well he knew the State House. Phil was able to tell us which representatives were important to see, what would motivate them, and what to expect when we walked into their office. This was hugely beneficial in preparing me for our visit, both with a plan of attack and with instilled confidence. I would definitely recommend groups with environmental bills contact the Sierra Club.

Jesse

Our second meeting about the bill was once we got to the State House, with Representative Christopher Markey from the Committee on the Environment, Natural Resources, and Agriculture. We went to the State House to try to convince the committee members to get the bill to a vote, and get it to the House Ways and Means Committee so it could be considered in this upcoming year’s budget. We tried to talk to all the senators and representatives on the Committee that day, but besides Markey we only spoke to legislative aides. Markey was one person Phil wasn’t sure about, as in whether he would be supportive or not. When we walked in, we saw an “Eat Local Local Hero” bumpersticker on his desk, and pictures of children in frames sitting next to it. He saw a framed letter and drawing from a child thanking him for his support on the Bottle Bill. We exchanged a glance, and were excited by these encouraging signs.

We gave him our elevator speech and he seemed receptive. We were a bit nervous and didn’t say everything exactly how we wanted to say it, but we got the point across. We had gone in intending to go to him first to use him as practice before going to Gobi and Pacheco, yet ironically he was the only legislator we spoke to in person. He chimed in every once in a while about how he had heard about all the animal lives plastic bags took, and that he thought it was an important issue. He said he would support it. He really did seem to care about what we had to say, and although we were nervous in the moment, in retrospect it was a very easygoing conversation, just like a peer-to-peer conversation. When we left we gave him a storybook flyer, which we had been showing him the whole time. We left with the sense that we had an ally in our corner.

Update

The bill was incorporated into Senate Bill S.2314. (This bill also contains H.1159 and H.1990, which were House drafts of the same bill.) As of June 20, 2012 the bill was favorably reported out of the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources, and Agriculture and was referred to the Senate Committee on Ways and Means.
The current Massachusetts bottle law, as established in 1982, places a five-cent deposit onto beverage containers for beer, malt, carbonated soft drinks, and sparkling water but excludes non-carbonated beverages, which have become increasingly popular since the bill became law 30 years ago. Updating the bottle bill will provide revenue to re-establish the Clean Environment Fund, which will focus on initiatives such as recycling and waste-reduction while creating jobs in the process and will save the Commonwealth money that is otherwise spent dealing with litter and trash.

**The Bill**

Bill H.890: “An Act Updating the Bottle Bill”

**Excerpt from Storybook**

Phillip Sego, Massachusetts Sierra Club Legislative Action and Political Chair, strongly supports the Bottle Bill. He sees not only an environmental issue at hand, but also a financial one. He points out that as the non-deposit bottle industry has grown “litter is increasing not only on streets but also in storm drains which presents problems to municipalities.” Sego says the trick is to get litter before it starts.

Sego also pointed out that when the Bottle Bill was passed in 1983, Massachusetts used 1 billion bottles annually, the vast majority of which became deposit. Today, we use 3.3 billion bottles, but 1 billion of them are non-deposit. This increase in non-carbonated beverages brings us back to where we were before the Bottle Bill was passed in 1983.

**Elevator Speech**

We believe in prosperity, clean communities, and not tripping on bottles on your way to work in the morning. Did you know that each year we throw about 1.1 billion beverage containers? That’s enough to fill Fenway Park five times! These bottles could all be recycled but they are not. In Massachusetts we currently have a law called the bottle bill. This places a five-cent deposit onto carbonated beverage containers and significantly increases their recycling rates. Our current
state bottle bill which was first implemented in 1983 is now outdated. It does not cover non-carbonated beverages such as tea, water, juice, and sports drinks. We now use an estimated 30,000 tons of these bottles per year. Once our thirst is quenched we place these bottles in landfills, we burn them in incinerators, and we toss them in our communities. This hurts our economy, our health, and our environment – but there is an easy solution! Updating the bottle bill to cover our non-carbonated beverage containers is the best way to fix this problem. The bill is a win for our economy, our health, and our environment.

■ Excerpts from Campaign Journals

Geneva

I met with Sierra Club’s legislative and political action chair Phil Sego over Skype near the beginning of the semester. The reason for the meeting was because I wanted to find out more about the Bottle Bill and the reasoning behind it. That I certainly learned in spades. Phil was full of tidbits that did not crop up immediately on Google – like that emergency rooms saw a 70-80% decrease in glass lacerations after the first bottle bill passed because people walking around were getting glass cuts in their feet.

Phil talked a lot about what Massachusetts looked like before the Bottle Bill – so I really got an image of how effective it was. He also talked about the politics of the Bottle Bill, and how money from corporations was a big part of it. The reason the Bottle Bill didn’t pass immediately was because corporations were buying politicians off. He also said the reason we weren’t going after non-carbonated alcohol was because the alcohol industry is loaded – and would definitely be willing to pour monetary resources into fighting the Bottle Bill. This isn’t the message heard from Beacon Hill, to be sure. Governor Patrick has said he didn’t want to overwhelm people with increased prices on alcohol because they had recently pursued an increase in sales tax on the substance.

It was good to connect with Phil and he made it clear that the door was open. ... I think my enthusiasm for the project worked well and the fact that he knew that I was a creative person who could put my creativity to use in this campaign. When the other party knows you’re bringing something to the table they tend to be a lot more eager to help you.

Rachel

On our first visit to the State House Geneva and I attended an event to show business’ support for the bottle bill. The event was hosted by MASSPIRG and took place in a small meeting room in the State House on February 14th. The room was packed with representatives from different environmental organizations, small business owners, legislators, and constituents. As Geneva and I walked into the room she said hello to different lobbyists that she had worked with in her previous experience. I sat and took notes as different business owners discussed the impacts of the bottle bill and the economic as well as environmental benefits of the bill.

Going to this event helped me to not only understand how the bill positively impacts small businesses but also how this bill affects communities. The event instilled a sense of excitement that the bottle bill was not purely and unemotionally an environmental issue but impacts everyone in Massachusetts.

At the end of the event Geneva and I introduced ourselves to Janet Domenitz, the director of MASSPIRG. This proved to be extremely helpful in eventually guiding me to Abe Scarr, who works with students through MASSPIRG. Abe has been invaluable throughout the semester in providing current and relevant information about the bottle bill as well as legislators to contact.

■ Update

As of July 31, 2012 the bottle bill was killed by the Joint Conference Committee which removed the bill from a pending jobs bill. (The bottle bill was attached to this bill in the Senate but not in the House.)

For more information

Massachusetts Coalition to Update the Bottle Bill
http://www.bottlebill.org