

Advocacy for Policy Change

Brandeis students work to reform
Massachusetts law

November 2020



INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR
ETHICS, JUSTICE AND PUBLIC LIFE
Brandeis University

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for American Civic Life” initiative to expand to all 50 states and to enhance ENACT’s digital platform.

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

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

To learn about ENACT: The Educational Network for Active Civic Transformation, and to sign up for updates, visit 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 best to 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 11th 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 2020, we anointed 27 citizen advocates for such issues as worker rights, juvenile justice, access to educational opportunities, renewable energy, reproductive rights, health equity, and immigrant 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.

Fortunate to start in-person, these students persevered through the abrupt mid-semester pivot to remote learning necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic. They adapted their work to account for changed legislative priorities and new methods of civic engagement. Their final “Present and Defend” took place via Zoom and incorporated members of the Brandeis community and our ever-expanding network.

Once again, I must thank several people whose support over the past 11 years has been invaluable. This course would not exist without the ongoing support of Professor Emeritus Richard Gaskins, my mentor and the former 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. Ethics Center Board member and former Massachusetts State Representative Jay Kaufman '68, MA '73 helped me to create a course worthy of Brandeis University. An expanding list of exceptional teaching assistants made the course a reality: Kaitie Chakoian-Lifvergren, David Duhalde, Andrew Hart, Misti Jeffers, Roz Kabrhel, Benjamin Kreider, Christian Lopez, Charlotte Powley, Melissa Ross, Doug Smith and Cynthia Tschampl,

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 trained Fellows in 29 states. Thanks to a multi-year grant from the Teagle Foundation's "Education for American Civic Life" initiative, ENACT is in the process of completing its expansion to all 50 states.

Students in ENACT courses, like those in "Advocacy for Policy Change," learn how to work with state legislators, legislative staff members, and community organizations to advance policy. With the guidance of David Weinstein of the Ethics Center, assistant director of ENACT, we are developing a robust national network of faculty, students and alumni that includes an online platform for resource sharing and collaboration.

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 Advisory Board member Norbert Weissberg and his wife, former Board member Judith Schneider; Advisory Board member and co-founder of the Louis D. Brandeis Legacy Fund for Social Justice, Jules Bernstein; The Teagle Foundation; Advisory Board member Mark Friedman; and the Rice Family Foundation. The students, Faculty Fellows and I are very grateful for their ongoing support.

In the 2019-20 academic year, ENACT piloted the ENACT Labor Network (ELN), a deep dive into labor issues. With the expertise of Brandeis University's graduate Heller School of Social Policy and Management, ENACT Faculty Fellows in Arkansas, Connecticut, and Maine joined me to mentor students to explore current labor issues in their respective states and to meet with advocates, experts and state legislators. The ELN was supported by the Louis D. Brandeis Legacy Fund for Social Justice, which is funded in part by Ethics Center Board member Jules Bernstein '57 and his wife, Linda Lipsett; as well as Bringing Theory to Practice, a national initiative in partnership with Elon University.

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. For more about ENACT and the ENACT Labor network see go.brandeis.edu/ENACT.

Melissa Stimell
Academic Director, ENACT: The Educational Network for Active Civic Transformation
Director, International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life
Professor of the Practice in Legal Studies
Chair, Social Justice and Social Policy Program

Our democracy is at a crossroads. The global pandemic, racial injustice, climate change and political polarization have made it clear that we live in uncertain times. Our norms and institutions don't seem so normal or so stable, and we are left to wonder about how we are to govern ourselves.

**A Message from
ENACT Distinguished
Legislative Mentor
Jay Kaufman, '68, MA '73**



Representative Kaufman visiting "Advocacy for Policy Change" in 2014.

What a demanding and exciting time for the wonderfully engaged students in Professor Stimell's "Advocacy for Policy Change" course. They get to look at policies and policy-making, both as they are and as they might be.

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. They grapple with competing policy ideas and engage with lawmakers and advocates alike.

"Advocacy for Policy Change" continues the Brandeis tradition of active engagement with the pressing issues of the time. As a Brandeis alum, I am particularly gratified to have had the opportunity to help establish and nurture this valuable course and, for many years, to work with the students and to serve as their liaison to state government. Their probing questions, insights and ideas made me and my State House colleagues better legislators, and they helped – and continue to help – make for better policy in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Building on the course's success on campus and in the halls of the state legislature, we committed to taking the model to scale, creating ENACT: The Educational Network for Active Civic Transformation with the goal of bringing to all 50 states the university/state house intersection we've known for a decade at Brandeis and Beacon Hill. Students, faculty, citizens and legislators in 29 states have been engaging in critical thinking about policy and policy-making, and we are well on our way to the full complement of 50.

If ever there were a time for better public leadership and citizen engagement, this is that time. The network of students, faculty, activists and legislators we are building in ENACT in Massachusetts and around the United States is more important than ever, and I am excited to be a part of its continued growth and development.

Jay Kaufman is a member of the International Advisory Board of the International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life. He served in the Massachusetts House of Representatives from 1995 through 2018, and is capping a career in leadership education by launching Beacon Leadership Collaborative, a new non-profit organization to provide leadership education, mentoring, and professional development support for those in and aspiring to public life.



The students of "Advocacy for Policy Change" with State Senator Becca Rausch '01 at the Massachusetts State House, February 11, 2020.

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 2020. 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.

Next Steps

At the end of the semester students determined where their bill was in the legislative process and recommended next steps for advocates. They considered potential implementation issues, future advocacy collaborations, potential lobbying problems, and any substantive problems with the bill itself.

Final Oral Presentation: “Present and Defend”

Bringing everything together, on April 28, 2020, students gave brief oral presentations of their legislative advocacy projects and responded to questions from audience members.

Ensuring Equitable Health Coverage for Children

Expanding comprehensive coverage under MassHealth to children who would otherwise be eligible except for their immigration status

Erin Chambers '20
Kalianni Neal Desatnik '20



Erin Chambers

While 98% of children in the Commonwealth have a form of health insurance, thousands of children from low-income families meet every single eligibility requirement for MassHealth but are denied this coverage due to their immigration status. While these children receive some coverage under the Children's Medical Security Plan, it has strict limits on eyeglasses, mental health, substance abuse, and does not cover hospital care. With an annual prescription drug cap of \$200, many children are forced to forgo crucial medications at the detriment to their health because they exceed the annual limit. By removing the citizenship requirement for MassHealth eligibility, Bill S.677/H.162 would expand comprehensive coverage under MassHealth to children who would otherwise be eligible except for their immigration status.

■ The Bill

S.677/H.162: An Act to ensure equitable health coverage for children.

■ Elevator Speech

Hello, my name is Erin Chambers and my name is Kalianni Neal-Desatnik. We are both residents of Waltham and are Health: Science, Society and Policy students at Brandeis University soon to be working in the Public Health and Healthcare fields. We can all agree that children in America should have the opportunity to grow up and lead healthy lives. Access to comprehensive coverage is an essential foundation for wellness in childhood and throughout adulthood. While 98% of children in the Commonwealth have a form of health insurance, thousands of children from low-income families meet every single eligibility requirement for MassHealth but are denied this coverage due to their immigration status. While these over 20,000 children receive some coverage under the Children's Medical Security Plan, it has strict limits on eyeglasses, mental health, substance abuse, and still does not cover hospital care. With an annual prescription drug cap of \$200, many



Kalianni Neal Desatnik

children are forced to forgo crucial medications at the detriment to their health because they exceed the annual limit. By removing the citizenship requirement for MassHealth eligibility, Bill S.677/H.162 would expand comprehensive coverage under MassHealth to children who would otherwise be eligible except for their immigration status. We urge you, Senator Friedman, to report S.677/H.162 out favorably out of committee on March 25th in order to bring us one step closer to providing essential health coverage, and the opportunity for a healthy future to all children in the Commonwealth.

■ Excerpts from Storybook

“One child came to the U.S. and was admitted to Boston Children’s Hospital with a brain parasite. Because [his prescribed medication] exceeded CMSP’s annual prescription drug cap, he was denied the treatment he needed and his mother was forced to seek out and ship these medications from Puerto Rico so that her son would be able to access the care he needed.” – Noemi Uribe, MPH, Project and Policy Coordinator at Health Care for All Massachusetts

This bill is for those who are covered and aren’t covered. It will help alleviate the gap in healthcare coverage for all children in the Commonwealth. Although there will be spending up front, in the long term this bill has elements of cost saving that will ultimately be a financial benefit. At Boston Medical Center (BMC), 80% of patients are on Medicaid (MassHealth) so this bill will greatly impact the health resources available to the population I serve and overall improve their quality of life.” – Charlotte Broce, MPH, Health Policy Analyst, Children’s Health Watch at Boston Medical Center

■ Op-Ed

Kalianni

A Healthcare Hypocrite: Blindsiding the Children of the Commonwealth

You would have to be living under a rock in the middle of the desert to not even vaguely know that the world is facing an unprecedented pandemic with Covid-19. In light of this new global crisis, health care has taken over the spotlight of the 24 hour news cycle as more people need tests, hospitals scour for extra ventilators, and lay people donate whatever they can to aid the shortage of personal protective equipment. For many Americans, these circumstances invoke fear, anxiety and uncertainty which all are valid rightly so, but for many of them they know if they were to catch this awful disease, health care costs would not be of concern because they have adequate coverage either through employment or public services such as Medicare and Medicaid.

However for many residents without a formal immigration status the possibility of needing medical care, and intensive hospitalization is cause for major worry due to the limited healthcare plan they are able to qualify for. In Massachusetts, children without a formal immigration status are covered under the Children’s Medical Security Plan (CMSP) which does not include emergency room services or inpatient hospital care; which are becoming ever more crucial in the treatment of coronavirus.

By not providing adequate healthcare to all children within the commonwealth, the state is blindsiding their most vulnerable children, not investing in the commonwealth’s future, and simply putting up a front as a leader in healthcare.

The state needs to own up to their false claims and pass legislation that will allow for all kids to have comprehensive health coverage.

Right now children and their families in the commonwealth are struggling and dying. A seven year old girl’s Type I diabetes is driving her family to miss rent payments, limit food shopping, and crowdsource money so they can continue to pay for her life-sustaining insulin. A 15 year old boy was rushed to the hospital for emergency open-heart surgery after foregoing essential heart medicine due to the high cost of the drug after reaching the \$200 prescription cap allotted under the current system of CMSP. And who knows what other tragic stories are being written as the commonwealth faces this global pandemic. These are just a couple of the dozens of children and families whose lives could be changed if they were able to receive more comprehensive health coverage.

Additionally, other states have already implemented legislation leaving Massachusetts trailing behind in investing in their kids, and thus their future. Communities within California, Illinois, New York, Oregon, and Washington D.C. have passed similar legislation to adequately cover eligible children regardless of their immigration status. In California, about 44% of the eligible children, ages 19 and under, gained adequate health coverage when they eliminated the formal immigration status requirement for Medi-Cal (the equivalent of MassHealth). If Massachusetts is going to stand by the title of being a ‘leader in healthcare’, then they too must follow in the steps of these states in equitably covering all children.

While these times may feel hopeless, scary, and uncertain, you can do your part to ensure that all children in the commonwealth have the same resources to face Covid-19, other illnesses, and the next awful disease to plague our world by emailing your state senators and representatives and urging them to talk favorably about the Cover All Kids bill (S.677/H.162) to their colleagues on the health care financing committee so that when this crisis concludes, Massachusetts will be ready to truly be a healthcare leader whether that be in daily life or another global pandemic.

Erin

Securing the Weak Link

The rapid spread of COVID-19 across the United States, especially in Massachusetts, has brought to light the inadequacy of the American health system in which millions of people lack sufficient health insurance coverage, including thousands of vulnerable children in this state alone. Preventing such a prolific transmission depends on ensuring that individuals who need medical care are able to access it, however over 20,000 children in the commonwealth alone have no or inadequate coverage due to their immigration

status and therefore lack access to a range of healthcare services crucial in both prevention of disease and in its treatment.

House Bill 162 and Senate Bill 677, known as “Cover All Kids,” would amend the General Laws to provide undocumented children from low income families the same insurance coverage as children already receiving MassHealth benefits. This would allow the opportunity for those with no previous coverage, or previously receiving scant coverage to access the medical care needed to prevent further transmission of the virus.

The immigrant population is a significant part of the diverse network of culture that exists here in Massachusetts. According to the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Coalition (MIRA), around 32% of children aged 5 and below are children of immigrants, 8% of which were not born in the U.S.

While children residing in the Commonwealth without a formal immigration status are afforded some coverage through the Children’s Medical Security Plan and the Health Safety Network, they receive nearly no coverage for hospital care. Additionally, there are harsh restrictions on benefits such as mental health and substance abuse, and an annual \$200 cap on prescription drugs.

While Massachusetts is usually a pioneer on the frontier of progressive healthcare legislation, it has fallen behind several other states like California, Illinois, New York, and Oregon who have already passed and implemented similar bills. In California, part of a bill expanding Medi-Cal coverage to all financially eligible Californians regardless of immigration status was passed and within a year around 216,000 newly eligible children gained coverage, approximately 44% of which were not previously covered by health insurance prior to the passing of this legislation.

Opponents of this type of healthcare reform often argue that expanding state Medicaid programs would be a financial drain on taxpayers. However, Boston Children’s Health Watch states that passage of this bill “will help alleviate the gap in healthcare coverage for all children in the Commonwealth [and]...has elements of cost-saving that will ultimately be a financial benefit” in the long run. Policy analyst, Charlotte Bruce, mentioned that “it is evident that lack of access to healthcare and lack of adequate coverage lead to issues such as overall instability within a child’s life, and continuous medical issues which entail burdensome and ever amounting costs.”

Regardless of how right-wing Americans feel about nationality, coronavirus has made it clear that it does not discriminate on grounds of citizenship. The fate of everyone’s wellbeing is tied up in the wellbeing of everyone in our society, including those with no or insufficient coverage, and that is dependent on adequate access to healthcare services.

The chain is only as strong as its weakest link, therefore it is crucial for legislation like SB 677/HB162 to be passed so that more people have access to healthcare services that will protect everyone. Cover All Kids will expand MassHealth benefits to eligible children without a formalized immigration status therefore ensuring that a significant number of vulnerable children can access the care they need when they need it and help prevent the proliferation of infectious disease both now and in the future.

Massachusetts has always been a leader in healthcare legislation. Now is not the time to change that. Residents of the Commonwealth should contact their State Senator or Representative and urge them to support the passage of SB677/HB162.

Erin Chambers is a candidate for a B.A. in Politics and Health: Science, Society and Policy at Brandeis University and a former campaign intern for California Congressman Brad Sherman.

■ House Ways & Means Script

TO: Aaron Michlewitz

FROM: Kalianni Neal-Desatnik and Erin Chambers

CC: Vice Chair Denise Garlick, Assistant Vice Chair Elizabeth Malia, and the House Ways and Means Committee

SUBJECT: In Support of Bill S.677/H.162 (Cover All Kids)

Honorable Chairman Michlewitz, my name is Kalianni Neal-Desatnik and I am joined by my colleague Erin Chambers. We are both residents of Waltham, MA, and are health policy students at Brandeis University and soon to be employees in the Public Health sector. Over the past few months we have been working to pass S.677/H.162: An Act to ensure equitable health coverage for children, colloquially known as “Cover All Kids”. We need your help in ensuring the passage of this bill and thus to ultimately secure a brighter future for all children in the Commonwealth.

Healthcare coverage and accessibility for all children is important to me and Erin since we have learned from our public health curriculum and health policy experts that inadequate healthcare can perpetuate poor health trends, lead to frequent hospitalizations, and increase food insecurity. While current coverage options such as The Children’s Medical Security Plan (CMSP) are available to children without a formal immigration status and provide crucial coverage for basic preventive services for thousands of children each year, the program has serious coverage limitations.

In advocating for the passage of this bill, we have heard stories of children and their families struggling to pay for life-saving heart medicine and necessary insulin pumps due to inadequate coverage. They sacrifice regular meals, routine

healthcare for others in the family, crowdsource the money or forego the necessary medicine until a health emergency arises and are forced to use expensive emergency medical services. These circumstances are no place for children when there is support out there but they are being barred on one simple account: their immigration status. In order to ensure healthier and more successful lives for all residents of the commonwealth, it is imperative that all children, regardless of their formal immigration status, receive adequate healthcare.

Removing the citizenship requirement from the eligibility for MassHealth, as the Cover All Kids bill proposes, is the solution to securing healthier lives. This will provide some of the most vulnerable populations of the commonwealth access to increased health coverage and the ability to lead healthier lives.

Massachusetts prides itself at being at the forefront of healthcare legislation and with four other states including New York, California, Illinois, Washington, and Oregon, as well as the District of Columbia, implementing similar legislation, this is not a time for Massachusetts to fall behind. In California, the first state to pass such legislation, about 86% of the newly eligible population enrolled in public healthcare within the first year. About half of these children and youth had not previously been enrolled in any type of healthcare. This increase in coverage is monumental and can greatly change the landscape and future success of these children. Why wouldn't we want to ensure the same to the children of the Commonwealth?

We understand that you may have potential concerns about financing S.677/H.162. While there is a high cost to implementing this piece of legislation, this investment in preventative healthcare, an overall decrease in healthcare and in the future and quality of lives for all residents of the Commonwealth.

Mr. Chairman, we urge you to make this bill a priority and vote it out of committee favorably. By supporting this bill, you will be supporting and protecting healthier futures for all children and a brighter future for all in the Commonwealth.

We look forward to working with the legislature to ensure that some of the most vulnerable populations in the state of Massachusetts have access to comprehensive health services needed to lead the healthiest life possible. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kalianni Neal-Desatnik

Brandeis University '20 | BA Candidate in Health: Science,
Society and Policy and American Studies

Erin Chambers

Brandeis University '20 | BA Candidate in Health: Science,
Society and Policy and Politics

■ Letter to the Legislator

Dear Mr. Barrett,

We hope this message finds you well. Our names are Kalianni Neal-Desatnik and Erin Chambers. We are both seniors at Brandeis University in the Public Health program. Through our studies, we have become passionate about healthcare accessibility and have decided to dedicate our careers to it. We strongly believe that all children in the United States should have the opportunity to lead healthy lives, and access to comprehensive healthcare is an essential foundation for the wellness needed to do so.

Under current Massachusetts law, children who would qualify for MassHealth are unable to receive comprehensive health coverage solely due to their immigration status. While these children are covered by the Children's Medical Security Plan (CMSP), this type of minimal coverage is not adequate for any child. Children and families have been forced to do things such as choose between having dinner on the table and paying for life-saving heart medicine and crowdsourcing money to pay for a necessary insulin pump to maintain a child's diabetes. These are circumstances no child should find themselves in, especially when there is support out there, however they are being barred on one simple account.

We are writing to you in support of S.677, An Act to ensure equitable health coverage for children, colloquially known as cover all kids. This bill would ensure that children and youth who are eligible for MassHealth would get coverage regardless of their formal immigration status. The bill addresses the discrepancies in health coverage and accessibility here in the Commonwealth and allows all children the support they need to live healthy lives and perpetuate our future success. As college students and soon-to-be professionals within the Public Health sector, we firmly believe that this bill will allow for better health outcomes, and allow children of the Commonwealth to prosper and reach their full potential.

We care immensely about the future and well-being of all those living in the Commonwealth, but to see such a great public health system in place that is not accessible to all simply does not bode well. With your background in the healthcare industry and as the former Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Children, Families, and Persons with Disabilities, we hope that you can understand the importance and necessity of the passage of this bill. We urge you to support this bill in upcoming legislative sessions and thus show support for all children, and the future of the Commonwealth.

Best,

Kalianni Neal-Desatnik

Brandeis University '20 | BA Candidate in Health: Science,
Society and Policy and American Studies

Erin Chambers

Brandeis University '20 | BA Candidate in Health: Science,
Society and Policy and Politics

■ Excerpts from Campaign Journals

Kalianni

On meeting with Noemi from MHCFA

First and foremost, Noemi told us that HCFAMA actually wrote the bill and thus had the most knowledge about it. She first gave us a run down of historical information including significantly different iterations of the bill that looked into altering Children's Medical Security Plan (CMSP). She also explained that the coalition HCFAMA belongs to has been around since 1995 – essentially meaning this work has been going on for our life spans and to help put in perspective the tedious process of healthcare policy.

I don't think this meeting could have been any better. She was able to give us so much information about the political environment, advocacy strategy, and actual bill content. There is no way we would have been able to continue with this bill without Noemi's insider knowledge and support. Erin and I both walked away from this meeting energized and excited for the future of working on this bill.

Children's Health Access Coalition Meeting

Suzanne started by updating everyone that the bill had been voted out favorably and referred to the Healthcare Financing committee. The strategy team had met and discussed amendments, short-term fixes, and projections for the bill. Some of this included having kids who are really struggling qualify for MassHealth, increasing CMSP caps, Senator Friedman's engagement, and the absent House Chair of the Healthcare Financing committee. Someone mentioned that, "given where we are this is not gonna pass this session but we are learning a lot of lessons for the right policy push next session." Additionally, they talked about how to better engage sponsors and how to better address the budget of the bill.

This meeting did not give us direct connections but it was interesting to see where the greater organizations stood as stakeholders in this legislation process. Additionally, I thought it was intriguing to hear the debriefing about the strategy team call. Although this call/meeting did not give a ton of insight in how to keep advocating, I think it helped us get a bigger picture of the parts in motion on this bill.

Erin

On meeting with Noemi from MHCFA

She explained that this specific version of the bill was new, and therefore the Children's Health Access Coalition (CHAC) and HCFAMA fully expect it to "die" on its March 26 reporting date,...that the goal of this legislative session is to garner as much support and awareness from legislators.... Additionally, she explained how CMSP and HSN work, and the ways in which she has seen it fail immigrant children in

need and how the passage of this bill would be able to close coverage gaps.

Overall, we came out of this meeting with a clear understanding of what the writers of the bill hope to accomplish, the advocacy efforts involved with it (both within HCFAMA as well as through CHAC), and were significantly more equipped to write the Legislative Report.

Additionally, Noemi invited us to join the next CHAC call where they would be discussing the next steps for the bill and were given the contact information for many people Given that we received all the information we set out to collect as well as a plethora of unexpected resources, I cannot think of a way it could have gone better. This meeting was additionally valuable in that it shed light on the interconnectedness of the nonprofit and advocacy world, and how important it was to make a good impression because our reputation would follow us. Furthermore, this meeting made it apparent to us that the impetus for change does not have to start in the statehouse, and that everyone can have a role in progressing a bill.

■ Next Steps

In light of COVID-19, HCFAMA has turned their efforts to more pressing issues that this pandemic has presented such as advocating for paid sick leave and staffing their HelpLine. However, coronavirus has brought a great deal of attention to the inadequacy of the American healthcare system. Americans have seen first hand what an overwhelmed, undersupplied hospital or medical center looks like and how inequitable the journey to seeking medical treatment can be. Many essential workers are minorities and often lack health benefits because the employer does not provide it to them. Additionally, many of these individuals also fall into some of the lower socio-economic classes in this country. For adults with no formal immigration status, they have had to make the tough decision between working or not. With the former choice, these individuals run the risk of contracting and exposing loved ones at home, which could lead to difficulties in obtaining medical care. The latter choice of not going to work leaves these individuals without steady income and greatly restricts their ability to provide essentials such as food and shelter for their families.

Given the unprecedented amount of active cases, stopping the spread of the virus has come to the forefront of priorities for many states, therefore making the issue of providing healthcare to immigrants without a formalized immigration status less polarizing. As a result, restrictions on healthcare access have started to ease slightly. In an effort to slow the transmission rate, Massachusetts has begun to cover the cost of treatment and care for those affected by the coronavirus through MassLimited, which is set up to provide services to those not covered by health insurance

in emergencies. This unique political climate surrounding healthcare access established due to the circumstances of the pandemic has provided an opportunity for the public to see first-hand the consequences of a health system that fails to provide for all residents, and therefore the need for people to have adequate health coverage. In terms of this specific bill, the entire pandemic can be used to leverage the necessity of adequate healthcare for all and be representative of the dangers that can arise when people have to choose between high healthcare costs and putting dinner on the table.

While we have focused our advocacy efforts on talking to those who historically support the idea of healthcare expansion in the past, we would use these circumstances to our advantage were we to continue advocating. Our priority would be to contact the members of the Joint Committee on Healthcare Financing that would previously be less willing to support these bills to ask them to vote in favor of the bill. We would present them with the problem of coverage gaps, emphasizing how having more uninsured individuals has exacerbated the spread of the virus, and therefore has contributed to the exorbitant cost of emergency supplies needed to mediate the influx of uninsured patients.

Looking forward long term, healthcare will have to transform in some way after this. The country has seen too much damage and distraught through job loss, isolation, and death. In the future, it may be easier to separate out healthcare from the immigration issue of this bill and prove to help in its passage due to the distraught this pandemic has caused. This bill, if re-introduced to the legislature, would likely gain more traction than this year and hopefully get passed in light of current events.

■ Update

As of 11/23/20: In June, the reporting deadline in the House was extended to December 31st, 2020. The Senate component of the bill was advanced to the committee on Senate Ways and Means, where it has remained since June 25th.

For more information

View the bill (MA legislature website):

S.611: malegislature.gov/Bills/191/S677

H.966: malegislature.gov/Bills/191/H162

Organization or Coalition support:

Health Care for All: hcfama.org/who-we-are

Removing Obstacles and Expanding Abortion Access

Also known as the “Roe Act”

Allia Service '22

Emma Wolters '20

Bill S.1209/H.3320 is an act that removes obstacles and expands access to abortion in Massachusetts. It addresses the problem of inequitable abortion access for certain populations, including minors, those using safety net coverage, and persons needing abortions after 24 weeks for medical reasons. It removes Massachusetts’ restrictive parental consent and judicial bypass requirements so young people have better access to the care they need. Additionally, it updates the law to Massachusetts’s current abortion practices as well as current scientific knowledge about reproduction. The Roe Act seeks to protect abortion as a fundamental right, in the event that *Roe v. Wade* is overturned.

■ The Bill

S.1209/H.3320: An Act to remove obstacles and expand abortion access

■ Elevator Speech

Hi, my name is Allia Service (and I’m Emma Wolters), we’re both residents of Waltham studying Health Policy at Brandeis University. We’re here to discuss the Roe Act.

Every individual deserves the freedom to make her own health decisions. Currently in Massachusetts people don’t have equitable access to abortion care, impeding their ability to have control of their own futures. Massachusetts has the most restrictive parental consent law in New England. Young people who don’t have a safe home environment must go through a grueling process in the legal system to get permission from a judge before obtaining an abortion. So, for some minors, it’s choosing between telling their parents and risking abuse or being thrown out of their home, or missing school and going before a judge. This delays the process by over 2 weeks, which leads to greater health risks and expenses. Parents who face the horrible reality of learning about a fatal diagnosis for themselves or their fetus after 24 weeks are criminalized for getting the care they need.

The Roe act removes these barriers and allows pregnant people to make decisions with their doctors instead of the legal system. It also ensures our laws are no longer outdated and reflect our scientific understanding of abortion, making abortion a public health issue instead of a criminal one. I urge you to speak with the house chair of the judiciary committee Representative Claire Cronin and ask her to schedule a vote and report the Roe Act favorably out of committee in the next month.

■ Excerpts from Storybook

Prenatal Genetic Counselor Judith Jackson, MS, CGC, has had patients who were given a lethal fetal diagnosis after the 24-week mark. They were forced to fly out of state and pay for the care they need out of pocket. She says, “It would be a huge relief for maternal and fetal medicine units to have the cutoff past 24 weeks.”



Emma Wolters and Allia Service

The Roe Act ends the cruel Judicial Bypass system. Planned Parenthood organizer Jordan Thornlow says that one Massachusetts minor was forced to call out of school and go before a judge or fear that her parents would throw her out. She says the young woman said “I felt scared, I felt punished, I felt like I had done something wrong because I had to be in the courthouse.”

The parental consent laws in Massachusetts are the strictest in New England. This is just one of the many barriers to abortion in Massachusetts. Thornlow explained “Your ability to make autonomous healthcare choices... is directly tied to do you have access.” She also remembered a young woman’s experience seeking an abortion through the judicial bypass process: “when I went to get my abortion, the clinicians, the nurses, everyone was so supportive. The only place I didn’t feel supported was the courtroom.”

Fortunately, lethal fetal diagnoses are rare after 24 weeks. But when they do happen because of delays in testing, the effects can be devastating for Massachusetts families. Jackson has had 3-4 patients who were forced to fly out of state to get abortions after testing revealed that the fetus was not viable, costing them thousands of extra dollars and time. “Sometimes abnormalities aren’t apparent until later on... so it definitely would be a better situation to have it extended.”

■ Op-Ed Allia

The 2020 Election May Be The End of Reproductive Freedom: The Roe Act Would Protect Massachusetts

Another four years of Trump almost certainly means a Supreme Court willing to overturn *Roe v. Wade*. Abortion laws in Massachusetts are more antiquated than we think. We need to take steps to ensure that anyone who needs to access an abortion, can. The Roe Act would guarantee equitable access to abortion to everyone, but most essentially, to young people. Massachusetts has the most restrictive parental consent laws in New England. The only way to get an abortion without telling your parents is to go through the judicial bypass process. That means you have to get a court order that says you’re mature enough to decide you don’t want to be a parent.

Did you know how to go about obtaining a court order when you were 17? No? Well I’ll walk you through it. First, you find an attorney. Like all teenagers I’m sure you’ll have one on staff. Next, you meet with the attorney (during business hours, of course). I hope you’re not busy with, say...school between 9 and 5. Oh, and I hope you have a car or can pay for transportation to your attorney’s office. Next, your attorney files a petition to the court and schedules a hearing before a

state judge (you know, the well-trained medical professionals who are adept at counseling minors about difficult medical decisions). The hearing will be in state court, the place where criminals are tried and sentenced. At the hearing, the judge will determine whether you’re mature enough to decide to have an abortion. The court will notify you of its decision in four days or so, after which you can start the process of actually getting an abortion.

In Massachusetts, pregnant minors are allowed to make any health decisions without parental consent except the decision to end their pregnancy. On average, parental consent delays abortions by nine days. Young people who go through judicial bypass are delayed by an average of 15 days, and one in five young people who go through judicial bypass are delayed by more than 21 days. Those three weeks are the difference between a medicated abortion and a surgical abortion, which costs about \$1000 more. And, of course, these restrictions disproportionately affect low income young people and young people of color.

Now, you might be thinking: “I’d want my child to come to me, I’d want to know if she was getting an abortion, this is a big decision.” It is a big decision. And your child probably would come to you because 77% of minors choose to tell a parent or trusted adult about their decision to have an abortion. But this law isn’t for your child, it’s for the 23% of young people without loving parents, without a support system. Young people who have to choose between telling their parents and endangering themselves or going through a confusing and cruel court proceeding. In fact, one in three young people who choose not to tell their parents about their abortions do so because they fear being kicked out of their house or physically abused. One young woman who went through the judicial bypass system as a 16-year-old said, “I felt scared, I felt punished, I felt like I had done something wrong because I had to be in the courthouse.” Since 1981, when the parental consent law was passed, only two young people have been denied abortions through judicial bypass. That means that the only purpose of the law is to traumatize young people and make it more difficult to get an abortion. We’ve seen this over and over again. Young people aren’t going to stop getting abortions. All we’re doing is making it more expensive and more dangerous for them to do so.

For months, legislators have been scoring points for cosponsoring the Roe Act and being an ‘ally’ for reproductive justice, without actually advancing the legislation. Now, they are dealing with the COVID-19 crisis, and other legislation is not a priority. But we can’t let reproductive justice get pushed aside again. We already have the votes: 113 of 200 legislators co-sponsor the Roe Act, which is more than enough to pass it. Abortions can’t wait for a pandemic and the young people of Massachusetts shouldn’t be ignored just because they can’t

speak up. I urge you to contact your legislator and ask them to insist that the Roe Act be voted favorably out of the Judiciary Committee before its May 12th deadline.

Allia Service is a student studying health policy, law and history at Brandeis University.

Emma

The Roe Act: Massachusetts's Plan to Keep Abortion Safe, Equitable, and Legal

In the midst of a pandemic, the federal government is struggling to come up with a plan. First, the President suggested that the flu was much worse and there was no need for the economy to shut down. Then he says hundreds of thousands could die. He tells states to get their own medical supplies, but then the federal government buys them up. Once again, it's up to the states to figure out what to do in a crisis. Massachusetts is working on a plan for COVID-19. But that's not the only disaster for which we need a plan. If the federal government or the courts strip abortion access, Massachusetts has a plan to save it. And that plan is the Roe Act.

The freedom from government intrusion in access to abortion has stood for 50 years. And right now, in Massachusetts, people can access abortion. But not all people. Imagine you're a 17-year-old woman. You realize that you're pregnant and need an abortion. If your parents find out, they'll throw you out of the house. Somehow, you scrape together enough money to afford care. But you need your parents to come with you and sign off for you to get the pill you need. Your only other option? Navigating the legal system, going before a judge and proving to someone who has no medical knowledge that you need this care. You have to skip school and pray that your parents won't find out where you are. This delays the care you need by 21 days, making it riskier. Some people don't have to just imagine this. It's their reality. And it simply isn't equitable. The Roe Act fixes it.

The turmoil on the federal level has not only cast doubt on the ability of teens to access abortion care but on the ability of everyone to access abortion care. One in four women will have an abortion. If the courts were to strike down Roe v. Wade, that's 879,053 women in Massachusetts alone. That's enough people to fill Fenway Park over 23 times. If the federal government stripped that right away, people would be forced to turn to dangerous at-home methods. But with the Roe Act, Massachusetts would continue to allow safe and regulated abortion care. Other states have realized this need as well. New York recently passed the Reproductive Health Act, affirming abortion as a fundamental right along with 10 other states who have similar laws.

The Roe Act, Bill S.1209/H.3320 will solve both the problem of making abortion access in Massachusetts

equitable and ensuring that our state continues to trust women in their right to make their own medical decisions. Even though the state legislature is rightfully focused on the current pandemic, bills like the Roe Act are still being considered.

Call the members of the judiciary committee today and urge them to vote out the bill favorably. Call your state representatives and tell them not to let this issue fall through the cracks.

Emma L. Wolters is a student at Brandeis University graduating in December 2020 with a B.S in Health: Science, Society, and Policy and a minor in Legal Studies

■ House Ways & Means Script

Good morning Chairman Michlewitz,

My name is Allia Service and my colleague, Emma Wolters, and I are here to talk to you about the Roe Act. We are both Waltham residents studying health policy and law at Brandeis University, and this bill is incredibly important to us because it protects the freedom to make deeply personal choices without government intervention.

I'd like to begin by thanking you for your support of the Roe Act and your invaluable help passing both the PATCH act, the ACCESS act and other legislation vital to reproductive justice and gender equality.

As a youth mentor, I'm sure you're aware that some kids aren't lucky enough to have the support of their parents or a safe home environment. Massachusetts has the most restrictive parental consent law for abortion in New England. Opponents of this bill argue that young people should be forced to go to their parents to talk about serious issues such as this one. And the fact is, the young people who have supportive parents will continue to do so. But as we mentioned above, not everyone has that. The Roe Act is for those young people with no parental support, with nowhere else to turn. Right now, young people who don't have a safe home environment must go through a grueling process in the legal system to get permission from a judge before getting abortion care. Even if these young people do have a trusted adult, aunt, coach, mentor in their life, the law requires parental consent. So for some minors, it's choosing between telling their parents and risking being thrown out of their home, or missing school and going before a judge. This delays the abortion process by over two weeks, which leads to greater health risks and expenses. Removing parental consent laws will speed up the process for minors so more people will be eligible for less expensive, safer medical abortions, which could save the state money on insurance costs in the long run.

The issue of inequitable abortion access in Massachusetts also affects adult parents who are trying to

have a child. Parents who face the horrible reality of learning about a fatal diagnosis for themselves or their fetus after 24 weeks are criminalized for getting the care they need. The Roe Act removes these barriers and allows pregnant people to make decisions with their doctors instead of the legal system. This bill also supports science and ensures our laws are no longer outdated and reflect our scientific understanding of abortion, making abortion a public health issue instead of a criminal one.

As the Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, I'm sure you're concerned about the finances. Luckily, the Roe Act does not have significant fiscal implications. The only part of the act that involves money is the provision that clarifies the Healthy Start Program, an element of the Health Safety Net (HSN) insurance program that offers supplementary insurance to people at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Line. The Healthy Start Program already covers all pregnancy-related care, the Roe Act simply clarifies that that care includes abortion. Abortion is already covered by MassHealth, and between 67.88% and 76.59% of people who use the HSN use it as a secondary payer, after their private insurance or MassHealth is charged. So, expanding abortion coverage to the HSN is unlikely to result in any significant increase in payments. In states like Massachusetts where Medicaid covers abortions, 52% of people who receive abortions pay for them with Medicaid, so it's likely that most people who would be eligible to use the Healthy Start Program to pay for abortion already qualify for MassHealth and are paying for it through MassHealth. Further, obtaining an abortion is less expensive than carrying a pregnancy to term. Since the Healthy Start Program already covers pregnancy related care, the Roe Act is unlikely to increase HSN spending.

Every day this bill is not passed is another day that a scared minor without the support of her parents has to navigate the legal system to get the care she needs. Every day this bill is not passed is another day parents who are faced with tragic circumstances have to fly out of state on their own dime to get care. The fiscal implications of this bill are incredibly minimal. I urge you to support this bill in the Ways and Means Committee so Massachusetts residents can receive the care they need as quickly as possible.

Thank you.

■ Letter to the Legislator

Dear Representative Lawn,

My name is Emma Wolters and my colleague, Allia Service and I, are writing to express our support for the Roe Act (H.3320). We are both residents of Waltham studying Health Policy and Law at Brandeis University. We want to start by thanking you for your support of the Roe Act, which affirms that everyone deserves the freedom to make their own

healthcare decisions. This bill is incredibly important to us and we appreciate your commitment to reproductive justice. We also know that the Roe Act probably is not at the top of your to-do list right now. We want to thank you for working through this public health crisis to keep us safe, but we implore you: don't let reproductive justice fall through the cracks.

As the father of 5 children, and considering your history of legislative support for children's issues, we know that issues affecting kids are important to you. But unlike your own children, some kids aren't lucky enough to have the support of their parents or a safe home environment. Massachusetts has the most restrictive parental consent law for abortion in New England. Opponents of this bill argue that young people should be forced to go to their parents to talk about serious issues such as this one. And the fact is, the young people who have supportive parents will continue to do so. But as we mentioned above, not everyone has that. The Roe Act is for those young people with no parental support, with nowhere else to turn. Right now, young people who don't have a safe home environment must go through a grueling process in the legal system to get permission from a judge before getting abortion care. So for some minors, it's choosing between telling their parents and risking being thrown out of their home, or missing school and going before a judge. This delays the abortion process by almost 3 weeks, which leads to greater health risks and expenses.

The issue of inequitable abortion access in Massachusetts also affects adult parents who are trying to have a child. Parents who face the horrible reality of learning about a fatal diagnosis for themselves or their fetus after 24 weeks are criminalized for getting the care they need. The Roe Act removes these barriers and allows pregnant people to make decisions with their doctors instead of the legal system. This bill also supports science and ensures our laws are no longer outdated and reflect our scientific understanding of abortion, making abortion a public health issue instead of a criminal one.

Every day this bill is not passed is another day that a scared minor without the support of her parents has to navigate the legal system to get the care she needs. Every day this bill is not passed is another day parents who are faced with tragic circumstances have to fly out of state on their own dime to get care. As Waltham residents and young women, this bill is incredibly important to us and we can see the need for it in our community. I urge you to speak with your colleagues on the judiciary committee and ask them to back this bill that supports young people, parents, and science.

Thank you,

Emma Wolters and Allia Service

■ Excerpts from Campaign Journals

Emma

Coalition Meeting

This meeting, as well as other meetings with the coalition, gave rise to invaluable connections going forward. Being connected with the bill's coalition not only helped us in crafting our message but also added legitimacy to our meetings at the statehouse. We had a staffer ask if we were professional lobbyists (we quickly informed them that we were not and that we were citizen advocates). What went particularly well about this meeting is that we took to heart the advice of presenting what we could offer the coalition as opposed to only focusing on what we needed from them. We ensured Jordan that we would keep in contact with her and give her a rundown of any meetings we had about the bill. As a result of us helping her with the organization's advocacy work, we were able to have a more productive and fruitful meeting.

Allia

On meeting with Dianna Williams

Emma and I met with Dianna Williams during our second statehouse visit. She was by far the most knowledgeable staff member we had the opportunity to sit down with. Representative Cronin, who is the House Chair of the Judiciary Committee, had been taking meetings with any Congress person who wanted to discuss the Roe Act. As of March 5th she had met with over 70 representatives and senators. Her office was making a big push to pass the bill and was planning to come up with a draft of the bill that compiled the suggestions she received in the meetings. The hope was that once the Judiciary committee had a draft that Speaker DeLeo approved of and they thought was likely to pass, the committee would report it out favorably. Ms. Williams was able to give us a better understanding of the concerns legislators had about the bill and the likely changes and timeframe.

Although Ms. Williams could not share any specific edits which were being discussed, the section on parental consent was definitely receiving criticism. This gave us a better idea of what to focus on when we talked to other legislators. We also learned that if the Roe Act was going to be reported out favorably it would probably happen in mid-April after the deadline for declaring candidacy had passed. This is because Speaker DeLeo did not want a protracted fight about abortion on the House floor because it could attract Republican challengers, even though the bill could still pass.

This is such a frustrating political reality. Throughout our meetings we heard only support for the Roe Act, and a majority of legislators co-sponsor it. However, without the OK

from Speaker DeLeo it will not get out of committee. Simply the perception that removing parental consent might inspire controversy is enough to put that section on the chopping block. Even though a majority of legislators support removing parental consent requirements and understand that these requirements are just a barrier to abortion, the section may be cut. From our discussions with Ms. Williams and the simple number of cosponsors, it's fairly clear that even if it came down to a fight on the House floor, supporters of the Roe Act could win. The only thing that's stopping legislators is the fear of bad press and Republican challengers.

■ Next Steps

If able to continue with our advocacy work on the Roe Act as originally planned, our focus would be on ensuring the bill is able to be voted out of the Judiciary Committee favorably by the May 12th deadline as well as maintaining as much of the integrity of the original bill as possible. To do this, we would start by meeting with the remaining members of the Judiciary Committee to either confirm their "yes" vote or to address any questions or concerns about the bill. After this, we would want to follow up with the connection we made at Representative Cronin's office, Dianna Williams. Specifically we would want to ask about the representative's progress in meeting with all of the representatives and whether or not there were any proposed changes to the bill. We would be particularly concerned with the parental consent removal section, this portion of the bill was under the most scrutiny.

Outside of the statehouse, we would be continuing to work closely with the Roe Act Coalition. We have already been in close contact with Jordan Thornlow, an organizer for Planned Parenthood and a member of the Coalition. We would continue to work with her, as well as try to attend Coalition meetings and reach out to other members. We would be particularly interested with meeting with someone working on the Roe Act for the ACLU because they might have more specific information about the legal process minors currently go through in Massachusetts when trying to obtain an abortion. We would also have liked to get more involved in the advocacy work the Coalition has been organizing. We would attend more phone banks and participate in any rallies or letter writing campaigns the Coalition organized.

In light of the pandemic, some of our plans would need to be changed. If we were to continue advocating for the Roe Act from our homes, we would still try to meet with as many members of the Judiciary Committee as possible, although the meetings would be virtual. However, we expect that legislators and their staff would be less available in the coming months as their priority is legislation concerning the pandemic. We would make following up with Dianna Williams a priority. As counsel to the House Chair of the Judiciary Committee, she would know whether the Representative is planning on

scheduling a vote and trying to get the Roe Act passed this session. We would focus our advocacy around the Judiciary Committee and encourage members to either extend the deadline for the Roe Act or vote it out favorably. If the bill is able to be voted out of the Judiciary Committee this session, it would likely go to the House Ways and Means Committee. In that case, we would focus our advocacy efforts on that committee and stress the limited fiscal implications of this bill.

We would also do our best to coordinate with the Roe Act Coalition. It most likely already has an advocacy plan. Our own advocacy would be informed by what the Coalition thinks. If the Coalition is still making a push to pass the Roe Act this session, that would be our focus. However, if the Coalition thinks it will not pass this session, then we would focus on setting up and planning for the next session when it could be reintroduced. Either way we would continue to attend any virtual events the Coalition sets up and continue to reach out to key Massachusetts legislators. This bill had a lot of support and was receiving a big push from multiple representatives and senators before the pandemic. If we were able to continue our work we would try to ensure that this momentum does not die out and that the Roe Act is pushed across the finish line.

■ Update

As of January 2021: The appointment of Amy Coney Barrett to the United State Supreme Court sparked a new focus on reproductive rights and the Roe Act. Following the House passage of budget amendments based on the Roe Act, the Massachusetts Senate voted 33-7 in June to add major policy changes to its fiscal year 2021 budget. Governor Charlie Baker vetoed the Roe amendments. The legislature then overrode his veto, and the Roe Act is now law in Massachusetts.

For more information

View the bill (MA legislature website):

S.1209: malegislature.gov/Bills/191/S1209

H.3320: malegislature.gov/Bills/191/H3320

Organization or Coalition support:

Planned Parenthood / Mass NARAL:

plannedparenthoodaction.org/planned-parenthood-advocacy-fund-massachusetts-inc/issues/roe-act

Fair Scheduling of Employees

Establishing fair, predictable scheduling in Massachusetts

Emily Rae Foreman '20

Elaina Pevide '20

As the American workforce evolves, many hourly workers have seen employers capitalize further upon their labor through erratic scheduling practices. Large corporations utilize new scheduling software to make last minute schedule changes in an effort to maximize profits (Cauthen, 2011). A culture of on-call, constantly changing schedules has put an immense burden on low-wage workers of America—especially in the food service, retail and hospitality industries where workers experience the most unpredictability. Families are at the whim of large employers, with little ability to plan for childcare, transportation, doctors appointments and more. The Fair Workweek bill would protect workers by mandating predictable weekly schedules given two weeks in advance, preventing employer retaliation for schedule change requests, granting new hours to existing employees and reducing the use of “clopening shifts”, defined as two shifts with less than 11 hours rest in between.

■ The Bill

S.1110/H.3809: An Act relative to the scheduling of employees.

■ Elevator Speech

Elaina: Hi, my name is Elaina Pevide (and I'm Emily Rae Foreman). We are students of Brandeis University, residents of Waltham and I am a Fall River voter. We are here to discuss bill S.1110/H. 3809 which is currently in the Committee for Labor and Workforce Development.

Emily Rae: Responsible planning is a foundation for the wellbeing of workers and their families as well as for the operation of a successful business. However, the reality is that unfair scheduling practices are creating a scheduling crisis for workers in Massachusetts, denying families stability and preventing businesses from reaching their full potential.



Elaina Pevide and Emily Rae Foreman

Elaina: Currently, 22% of hourly workers in Massachusetts are employed in the foodservice, retail and hospitality industries, all of which experience some of the worst scheduling practices. New scheduling technology has enabled large corporations to maximize profits through last-minute schedule changes. I can personally attest to the realities of irregular scheduling. In high school, I worked in the foodservice industry and experienced dramatic fluctuations in hours week-to-week. I got my schedule mere days before a new schedule started. When I started working at 16, I didn't have access to a car which left me constantly stressed about transportation. I remember how

my co-workers and I were constantly afraid of asking for time off out of fear that our hours would be cut permanently.

Emily Rae: As you can imagine, scheduling habits like these leave workers and families at the whim of large corporations, resulting in the inability to plan for childcare or transportation. Workers in Massachusetts experience devastating income volatility and underemployment. Unfair scheduling disproportionately affects women and people of color, meaning that fair, predictable scheduling, has huge implications for alleviating racial and gender disparities in Massachusetts.

Elaina: S.1110 and H.R.3809 target large employers (those with over 50 employees) in the hospitality, foodservice and retail industries. While only 7% of the retail industry meet these criteria, those employers encompass 77% of retail workers in the Commonwealth. There are similar statistics for the other industries covered, but this emphasizes that this is an issue of large, national companies abusing new scheduling technology to maximize profits when it could be used to streamline the workforce.

Emily Rae: The bills require employers to release the schedule two weeks in advance, publicly offer newly available hours to existing employees, offer 11 hours to rest between shifts, and prevent employer retaliation if workers request time off. Employees would be able to realistically manage hourly work along with other responsibilities, such as childcare, transportation or further education. It would also support responsible scheduling habits and workplace efficiency, benefitting enterprises in Massachusetts.

Elaina: We urge you to vote this bill out favourably before the June 5th deadline. We hope you support this vital legislation and assist in seeing it enacted into law.

Thank you!

■ Excerpts from Storybook

“It would be significantly less chaotic to have predictive scheduling in place... having a conversation off the bat to know what you’re getting into would make things run much more smoothly.”

Izabel is a hospitality and catering worker, she is also a mother and a student. Izabel said her employers would call her asking her to work an hour before a shift started. If she declined, they would stop offering hours. It was typical for shifts to be cancelled unexpectedly with no opportunity to make up the lost income. It was difficult to manage multiple jobs and she would often miss school or be without child care if she was called into work.

Both from Chelmsford, Olivia is a food service worker and Kaitlyn has experience in food and retail, while also studying full time. Olivia spoke of an inability to pay rent, attend family events or make doctors appointments because of irregular hours. Kaitlyn expressed the lack of concern employers showed in accommodating her school schedule. Both girls told stories of uncompromising bosses while working in food service during high school.

Predictable scheduling would mean a reliable income for Izabel. No more cancelled shifts and unexpectedly small paychecks. She could work multiple jobs and make ends meet without worrying about conflict. Knowing her schedule ahead of time would allow her to plan on being there for her children. She would no longer have to worry about her duties as a mother, student and provider being in conflict.

Olivia and Kaitlyn stressed the mental benefits of a Fair Workweek. Instead of relying on employers to be fair (which often was not reality for them) they said it would be empowering to have a sense of stability and work without fear of retribution. Olivia, who has worked as a scheduling manager in the past, discussed how predictable scheduling would have simplified life for her in that role.

■ Op-Ed

Elaina

What to do with our newfound respect for hourly workers

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused Americans to see how truly valuable America’s hourly workforce is. Those referred to as “low-skilled” workers weeks ago are now lauded as those at the frontlines of this health crisis.

The drive-through workers handing you a sense of normalcy with your fast food order, the grocery store clerks working overtime to assuage stockpiling masses and the retail employees frantically restocking shelves of hand sanitizer are finally being recognized for the essential services they provide society. Social media is overflowing with messages of gratitude and calls for hazard pay to reward these recently overlooked employees, a call which has yet to be answered in Massachusetts despite the recent death of a Walmart employee in Lynn.

With multiple states in lockdown and the economy in a nasty downward spiral, hourly workers are walking a thin line between being our nation’s heroes and being out of work. We have seen massive unemployment and cutbacks across sectors, with much more to come.

When the crisis began, we saw the devastation many families faced as the shifts they had relied on disappeared overnight. Uncertainty about when or if workers can expect

work and pay is devastating to employees and their families. Grocery workers have been expected to work more hours to meet demand, and school and daycare shutdowns exaggerate the existing struggle many families face juggling childcare with unpredictable schedules. Everyone can sympathize with the stress and panic associated with these last-minute changes and uncertainty caused by COVID-19, but this stress and panic is not new.

In recent years, the rise of new scheduling software has resulted in more erratic and unpredictable schedules for hourly workers. High tech traffic predictions lead to last-minute schedule changes, with employees often seeing shifts cancelled while they are already on their way.

Weekly fluctuations in hours, and thus pay, result in dramatic income volatility- leaving families unable to pay bills, plan ahead or save for rainy days like these. Legislators and economists are coping with the fact that most Americans have little by the way of savings, a side effect of the erratic paycheck-to-paycheck lifestyle we force our workers to lead.

Employers manipulate hours not only to maximize profit, but in an effort to restrict eligibility for benefits. This has left thousands of Americans unable to access employer health insurance, a harsh reality which we are dealing with now.

As hourly workers lack the savings or healthcare to cope with this crisis, it begs the question, what could we have done earlier to prepare our newfound heroes?

One solution that gleams brightly in hindsight is the Fair Workweek legislation that has been passed in Oregon and several municipalities across the country. Fair Workweek laws, also referred to as “predictive scheduling”, ensure that employees can depend on stable weekly schedules given in advance and compensation for last-minute schedule changes.

A Fair Workweek bill has been introduced for several sessions in the Massachusetts legislature, but this session’s version (S.1110/H.3818) showed promise after successful implementation of similar ordinances in cities like New York and Seattle. On Beacon Hill, the legislation had received an extension order and was under committee deliberation when the COVID-19 pandemic took over legislative priority.

The Fair Workweek legislation proposed in Massachusetts covered food service, retail and hospitality workers, who experience the most erratic scheduling practices. A huge swath of these employees continue to work during this pandemic due to their designation as “essential” by state and federal officials. As we expect them to work on the frontlines of this crisis, shouldn’t we be doing all we can to respect their labor, prepare them for the future and protect our economy against future events like these?

While the focus and capacity of the Massachusetts legislature has shifted considerably in the last month, this

pandemic highlights the need for a Fair Workweek in the Commonwealth. In addition to thanking your grocery store clerk or delivery driver, contact your legislators in support of predictable scheduling in Massachusetts and visit FairWorkweekMa.com. And, don’t forget your newfound respect for hourly workers once things go back to normal.

Emily Rae

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is no doubt that healthcare workers are at the forefront of this country’s fight. But there is another group of individuals whose actions are nothing short of heroic, who we must not forget to care for and support at this time in history: hourly workers in the food, hospitality and retail industries. Millions of hourly workers across the United States are still going to work and millions more have already, or will soon, lose their jobs due to the economic crisis. This crisis has brought to light how detrimental unfair scheduling is. It has also highlighted how valuable this work is to our country. It is now more important than ever that amidst this crisis we do not forget to support Massachusetts’ hourly workers in the food, retail and hospitality industries, by passing joint bill S.1110/H. 3809, otherwise known as The Fair Work Week Bill.

Olivia, a 20-year-old college student and a retail worker, is just one individual in Massachusetts who has been impacted by unfair scheduling. Olivia spoke about being unable to pay rent on time because her job schedules her hours so irregularly. She often has to miss doctors appointments and family events due to unexpectedly being called into work. Olivia fears that if she turns down a shift her hours might be cut altogether. Furthermore, as a student, Olivia worries that her unpredictable schedule is interfering with her education, as her employers are often unsympathetic to her class schedule. Olivia’s story is just one example.

On top of leaving individuals unable to create stable schedules for school, family obligations, or doctors appointments, as we saw in Olivia’s case, unfair scheduling greatly affects the economic well being of the Commonwealth in broader ways. Unfair scheduling increases income volatility and forces individuals and families to struggle to make ends meet. It is reported that among the retail and food industries the average worker will experience a fluctuation of 34% in their monthly income. Furthermore, unfair scheduling practices especially impact working mothers or those with care responsibilities, who are unable to find last minute child care when called into work. This disproportionately affects women and people of color, meaning that fair, predictable scheduling, has huge implications for alleviating racial and gender disparities in Massachusetts. As a state which prides itself at being at the forefront of progressive and inclusive legislation, Massachusetts is falling embarrassingly behind other states in terms of caring for our hourly workers

The Massachusetts Fair Work Week bill is similar to other bills that have already been passed in New York City, Seattle, and Chicago. It applies only to larger businesses, those with over 50 employees. It targets large national corporations, while not impacting small businesses. The basic tenants of the bill are that 1) employees will be given two weeks advance notice of schedules, 2) they will be publicly offered available hours as existing employees, 3) employees must receive at least 11 hours to rest in-between shifts, and 4) employees will be protected from employer retaliation if workers request time off. Should employers be found in non-compliance, they are liable to their employees. Sounds pretty simple right? But for something that seems simple, and self-evident, it will have a massive impact.

In these trying times, it may be difficult to give our time and attention to other matters or bills in the legislature. But during the COVID-19 pandemic, hourly workers are facing not just unjust and unstable schedules, but they are risking their lives to go to work. Now more than ever is the perfect time to pass A Fair Work Week Bill. We must not forget to support and protect the rights of hourly workers. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to light many cracks in our government's walls, one of which is our job security and treatment of those who are integral not only to our economy but to our livelihoods. Hourly workers in the retail, food and hospitality industries have a right to a fair and predictable workweek. I urge you to call your representatives and senators and ask them to Support S.1110/H.3809.

■ House Ways & Means Script

Hello, we are Elaina Pevide and Emily Rae Foreman and we are students of Brandeis University, residents of Waltham and Elaina is a Fall River voter. We are also advocates of bill S.1110/H. 3809: An act Relative to the Scheduling of Employees, also known as the Fair Workweek Bill. The bill is currently in the Joint Committee on Labor and Workforce Development, we have spoken to legislators within this committee and are hoping it will be voted out favorably before the June 5th deadline.

Ensuring responsible planning on behalf of employers and the security of employees in the Commonwealth is integral to the economic, social and overall wellbeing of Massachusetts residents. However, unfair scheduling practices in the Massachusetts retail, foodservice and hospitality industries are creating a scheduling crisis for hourly workers. Fair scheduling practices are beneficial not only to employees but to the Commonwealth as a whole, as it will bring efficiency to businesses while supporting the financial stability of residents, which will strengthen the economy considerably. We believe that the Fair Work Week bill corresponds to your personal values, demonstrated through your commitment to support job training and placement programs.

The Fair Workweek legislation, which affects large nation-wide employers (those with over 50 employees across locations), seeks to curb the issue of erratic scheduling through several measures. The bills require employers to release the schedule two weeks in advance, publicly offer newly available hours to existing employees, offer 11 hours to rest between shifts, and prevent employer retaliation if workers request time off. Employees would be able to realistically manage hourly work along with other responsibilities, such as childcare, transportation or further education. As it is now, workers struggle to plan for job training or higher education while working- depriving the economy of some valuable additions to the skilled workforce. Unpredictable scheduling is erratic and inefficient, denying families the ability to market their time in a way that grants them stability and upward mobility, thereby preventing the economy from reaching its full potential.

The bills are largely revenue neutral, as they will not cause the Massachusetts legislature any funding to implement. Should employers be found in non-compliance they are liable to their employees. If an employer fails to post the schedule fourteen days in advance they owe employees \$75 for each day the schedule is not posted. If an employer fails to offer hours to an existing employee when they become available that employer must compensate the employee \$100 and if an employer fails to award hours to said qualified employee under section they must compensate the employee \$1,000. If an employer is found to be in non-compliance with the bill it would be under the power of Attorney General, Maura Healey, to pursue charges against the employer. While this may mean a certain expenditure on behalf of the Attorney General office in pursuing charges, the employer would have to pay damages not only to the employees but to the state of Massachusetts. In New York, where similar legislation was passed, Chipotle Mexican Grill was sued for \$1 million for non-compliance – including restitution for employees and fines paid to the city.

Additionally, this bill will also be economically beneficial to Massachusetts as it will help to reduce income volatility and involuntary part-time work. Many part-time workers wish to work more, and this bill will allow them to do so. It is reported that among the retail and food industries the average worker will experience a fluctuation of 34% in their monthly income, largely due to dramatic changes in hours scheduled. Furthermore, four out of every ten households that experience income volatility struggle to pay their bills on time and 25% of said families have used payday lenders or pawnshops to attempt and compensate for income changes. This negatively affects the economic health of the Commonwealth as families experience income instability and are unable to financially plan for the future.

The one small expansion in government spending corresponds to one of the rights outlined within the bill—under the Fair Workweek laws, employees will have a right to unemployment benefits if their employer is non-compliant and violates the standards outlined in S.1110 and H.3809. Following Seattle’s Secure Scheduling Ordinance, the growing pains of managers adapting to the new regulations caused non-compliance that we expect here in Massachusetts, so we must protect workers who find themselves unable to cope during the transition. We also expect that the issue of non-compliance, and thus, the number of people on unemployment, will be low. In Seattle, the first year review found that the majority of businesses were able to adopt the core tenants of the program—such as 2-week notice and predictable weekly schedules.

This is because fair scheduling is, contrary to what our opponents say, is good for businesses and good for the economy. Implementing fair workweek policies is streamlined and simple, employers can utilize the same technologies they are currently using to make “just-in-time” changes to streamline the process of predictive scheduling. Once in effect, predictive scheduling has massive implications in creating a positive and efficient work environment. Workers aren’t burdened with planning crises, aren’t living in fear of their shifts being changed and, put simply, are at work when they want to be at work and can be at work. This stability and routine makes workers feel more optimistic and focused in their workplace. A pilot program found that predictive scheduling practices increase productivity and sales, along with producing a significant return to investments. This reality, combined with the long-term effects of stable incomes and scheduling on families, will bring prosperity and tax revenue to the economy.

Chairman Michlewitz we request your help and commitment to this legislation vital for workers across Massachusetts. We ask that you encourage your colleagues in the Committee on Labor and Workforce development to vote S.111/H.3809 out favourably. If this bill should enter the Committee on Ways and Means we ask that you make it a priority and see it passed through the committee.

Thank you!

■ Letter to the Legislator

To: Senator Michael J. Barrett

We are writing in support of Bill S. 1110, An Act Relative to the Scheduling of Employees. As concerned residents of Waltham, we believe it is vital to the success of the Commonwealth to have fair, reliable scheduling for food, retail and hospitality workers. These employees are worthy of the better working conditions, security and prosperity that S. 1110 would provide.

This bill would benefit thousands of Massachusetts residents by requiring employers to provide reliable schedules

two weeks in advance, to schedule an employee’s shifts more than 11 hours apart and offer existing employees new hours before hiring an outside applicant. Workers will be able to request schedule changes without fear of retaliation and will be compensated for last-minute shift cancellations and changes. While some may argue that this bill is anti-business we are confident that fair scheduling practises would ultimately benefit businesses in the commonwealth, as shift management would be streamlined and businesses would see higher revenue with employees who have higher overall wellbeing.

Today, families and individuals struggle with the unpredictable scheduling and pay that come with retail, food and hospitality jobs. Often underpaid, these workers live uncertain of how many hours of wages they can count on for the next week. Working mothers struggle to find childcare for their children due to last-minute schedule changes. Our youngest workers forgo asking for time off for SATs and school activities for fear of retaliation from their employers. The Massachusetts legislature should pave the way on this vital issue and curtail these problems by passing S. 1110.

This bill has, disappointingly, been stagnant since its hearing in the Committee on Labor and Workforce. We urge you to speak with your colleagues, implore the members on the Committee to vote this bill out of committee and inspire movement on this vital piece of legislation, before the June 5th deadline. As constituents, your support of S. 1110 is of utmost importance to us.

Thank you,

Elaina Pevide and Emily Rae Foreman

■ Excerpts from Campaign Journals

Elaina

On meeting with Senator Moore

One of the quickest lessons we learned during this meeting, which was our first after that with a staffer under the bill’s sponsor, was that we truly were the experts in the room. Both Senator Moore and Matthew knew nothing of the bill, which we had somewhat expected due to the bill’s low profile during this legislative session. However, the issue of unfair scheduling and the technology used to perpetuate it were entirely unknown to the Senator and his staffer. This meeting was by far the most difficult we had. Perhaps it was because he was the only official we met with directly, but it felt as though the power dynamic in the room was different than the meetings to come. A combination of his direct nature and lack of information about the bill resulted in a long, inquisitive conversation where Emily Rae and myself explained the minute mechanics of the bill, the reason behind the 50 employee threshold for small businesses and how this would impact franchisees. These were difficult questions that we handled well, but I certainly felt on the edge of my seat most of the meeting. It reinforced to me the need for total preparation.

Emily Rae

On meeting with Senator Lewis' Staff

Overall, this meeting taught me that often lobbying is simply keeping the bill in the forefront of legislators minds, even those who support it. While this meeting had much less immediate pay-off as compared to the meeting with Senator Moore because in that meeting we actually introduced the bill to the Senator, it was still important because we showed continued support for the bill and reminded Senators Lewis' office that this is an issue the commonwealth cares about. It is important in our efforts that we keep the bill at the forefront of legislators minds, even those who already support the bill, or else we risk it falling into obscurity.

■ Next Steps

Through our conversations with legislators, committee staff members and advocates, we had felt as though there was significant hope to be had for the passage of the Fair Workweek bill in this session. During our first meeting at the State House with Kyle Murray, the legislative aide under Senator Pacheco who introduced the bill, we were told that the bill had been “lying low” and “flying under the radar”. Our four March 5th meetings gave us insight into how to move forward on the bill. It seemed as though we had motivated staffers, both under Committee leadership and within the Labor and Workforce Development staff, to put the bill back on their radars. Conversations were being had within the Committee around wording and addressing the mechanics of the bill. We had built positive connections with staffers and found two potential champions in Senator Jehlen and Representative Hay, both of whom seemed deeply interested in the bill. We hoped the staffers, their bosses and the committee members would perhaps revive conversation amongst the committee members after those meetings. Now, it feels as though our contacts are less fresh and there is certainly less priority in moving the Fair Workweek bill.

Luckily, the extension order until June and new relevancy of the bill gives a hope for eventually moving on the legislation. If we were to continue organizing, we would leverage the current COVID-19 crisis to emphasize to Labor & Workforce members that supporting hourly workers is currently very important and favorable. We would maintain the “low radar” status of the bill until it moved out of Committee, which I feel is realistic seeing how many members are co-sponsors and spoke favorably of the bill. After working through the kinks of wording and addressing the final concerns that staffers explained to us on March 5th, most notably the issue of franchisees, we would hope to see the bill moved on favorably.

After this movement, our focus would shift to more public awareness and grassroots organizing. This stage would also involve more collaboration with Jobs with Justice (JwJ), who already have the expertise and man power for

public campaigns of this size. We believe the relatively low profile of the bill will help it pass through the committee without raising opposition. However, more public awareness and discussion must be raised eventually if the bill is ever to pass through the House and Senate, even if this means raising opposition. Therefore, after passing the committee we would seek to raise public discourse through Op-eds, public campaigns and general media attention.

We would also be meeting with more officials, likely with additional help from JwJ advocates. One issue to be addressed that we spoke of briefly with Mark Martinez is that of bipartisan support. We would meet and build a relationship with the Labor Committee's Senate Republican Patrick O'Connor, who had introduced a similar Fair Workweek bill this session. Mark had mentioned that gaining his full support of S.1110 would be integral to gaining support across the aisle. Organizing efforts would also seek to incorporate business interests and working to capitalize upon their support of the bill.

Based on the renewed interest in working class politics and the momentum of positive public opinion for other recently passed labor legislation in Massachusetts (such as the FMLA and minimum wage bills passed last session), we presume that mobilizing a widespread base of support would be possible. Through successful organizing to assure Representatives and Senators of their constituents' desire for predictable scheduling and the leveraging of Labor committee leadership within the State House, I think that we could most definitely aid in the passage of our legislation by the end of this session.

■ Update

As of 11/23/20: During the Covid-19 pandemic, the bill's reporting deadline was extended several times. In late October, the Senate version of the bill was recommitted to the Committee on Labor and Workforce development where, on November 5th, where it was accompanied by a study order along with two other bills pertaining to family leave and scheduling.

For more information

View the bill (MA legislature website):

S.1110: malegislature.gov/Bills/191/S1110

H.3809: malegislature.gov/Bills/191/H3809

Organization or Coalition support:

Fair Work Week Massachusetts coalition: fairworkweekma.com

Jobs with Justice: massjwj.net

Endorsing Organizations: fairworkweekma.com/endorsing-organizations

Preventing Overdose Deaths and Increasing Access to Treatment

Legalizing Safe Injection Facilities across the commonwealth to prevent fatal overdoses, improve public health, and promote access to health, recovery and social services.

James Parkhill '21
Abby Smursynski '21



James Parkhill and Abby Smursynski

This bill would legalize safe injection facilities (SIFs). Currently in Massachusetts, the number of yearly opioid overdose deaths consistently exceeds deaths from both motor vehicle accidents and deaths from firearms. Research conducted by the Massachusetts Medical Society shows that SIFs have tremendous positive effects on public health. Not only are they an effective strategy in reducing fatal overdoses, HIV transmission, and Hepatitis B and C transmission, but they also help to minimize public order problems and improve access to health, recovery, and social services for people affected by substance abuse disorders. Overall, SIFs would have a tremendous effect on public health.

■ The Bill

H.1712: An Act relative to preventing overdose deaths and increasing access to treatment

■ Elevator Speech

We can all agree that healthcare is a right held by every Massachusetts citizen. Equal access to healthcare includes people who inject drugs. Over 1500 people died of opioid related overdoses in MA just this past year, bringing the total number of deaths to over 17,000 people since 2000, enough to fill TD Garden. While Massachusetts has attempted to make progress, in four years the overdose death rate has only decreased by 5% and overdose related emergencies continue to rise.

For this reason, the House has proposed bill H. 1712 which would allow for the formation of harm reduction sites. Harm reduction sites allow people with substance abuse disorders to inject pre-obtained illicit substances under the supervision of trained medical professionals. It would provide people who inject drugs with clean needles, access to counselling and information on treatment

services. Harm reduction sites have been shown to reduce overdose deaths by more than 30% and save more than \$3.5 million dollars annually due to the reduction in HIV and Hepatitis B and C as well as EMS services.

While many opponents worry about the legality of harm reduction sites, a US district judge ruled them lawful in October of 2019 citing current data that shows no increase in drug use which means they do not violate the controlled substances act.

We urge you to support and vote H. 1712 out of the joint committee on mental health, substance use and recovery favorably by May 15th. It will save countless lives.

■ Excerpts from Storybook

- “Regardless of how someone becomes addicted, once you’re addicted, what drives continued use isn’t that ‘this is fun’, what drives continued use is that without the drug you feel really sick.” – Brandeis Heller School faculty member Dr. Andrew Kolodny, former Chair of Psychiatry at Maimonides Medical Center in New York
- According to the Massachusetts Medical Society, SIFs
 - Reduce transmission of HIV and Hepatitis B and C by 85%
 - Decrease overdose death rates by 35%
 - Reduce overdose related ambulance calls by 68%
 - Will provide \$3.5million dollars of health care savings annually from a single SIF site, which can be funded by only expanding the state budget by \$1 million
- “He fell and hurt one of his legs [at work] and I remember that that was really the beginning...the doctor who saw him start[ed] prescribing him oxycodone so then he got addicted to that; he couldn’t stop doing that.... To me at the end, it was not the same child that I knew, it was totally different.... We ended up with him dying and sometimes I feel guilty and I said maybe I didn’t do enough.” – a mother

■ Op-Ed Abby

The Other Public Health Crisis

According to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, more than 1500 Massachusetts residents died of opioid related overdoses last year. What are drug users doing during this time of crisis? They have nowhere to go. Nowhere to get clean needles during a time like this. All of the programs have stopped and if they overdose, they risk exposure to a COVID-19 infested ambulance. What about a homeless shelter; nope; they don’t let junkies in. So now they are on the street, nowhere to go, nothing to do, except drugs.

Massachusetts has been facing a public health crisis for decades, not COVID-19 but the opioid epidemic. Every year, hundreds of people die from this epidemic while the state legislature throws money into expensive urban programs that only lower the death rates by 1-2% each year. If we have learned anything in the past few weeks, it is that life is fleeting and precious and everyone deserves the chance to fight. This is why the Massachusetts legislature needs to implement harm reduction sites.

Harm reduction sites are proven to successfully combat the opioid crisis. Worldwide there are more than 100 harm reduction sites in over 11 countries. Harm reduction sites have been endorsed by the Massachusetts Medical Society and the

American Medical Association. Why wouldn’t they be? Harm reduction sites have been shown to reduce opioid overdose death rates by 35%. These are human lives that could be saved.

A harm reduction site is a hygienic space where people with substance use disorders are able to go and use clean needles and safely administer drugs under the supervision of medical personnel. They also provide counselling and treatment options at these sites. The infrastructure for these sites already exists and could be modified within a week’s time if the law was passed and implemented. One of the largest issues in the world of drug use is not just obtaining but disposing of needles. I mean, I know I really don’t mind accidentally stepping on a dirty heroin needle when I’m out walking my dog, but I think other people just might. Dirty needles result in the spread of HIV, Hepatitis B, and Hepatitis C which are costly diseases for both individuals and the state government. The Massachusetts Medical Society estimated that the implementation of a harm reduction site would save \$3.5 million annually due to the reduction of these bloodborne illnesses. That is taxpayer money that would likely be reallocated; perhaps it could go toward unemployment insurance or economic stimulus, mediating the effects of this other public health crisis.

I know what you are thinking, I don’t want these drug users in my city, on my block, in my backyard. But when was the last time you went into a Dunkin’ Donuts that didn’t have a homeless person parked in front of it? People who inject drugs are all around you and their community is wide spread and more tightly knit than you may realize. The fact is, consumption sites already exist in the United States, but they are extremely unsafe. Bill H.1712 would change this. Harm reduction sites provide access to medical care and treatment. This bill, H. 1712, would allow Massachusetts citizens to have a safe place to go during this time of crisis. I urge you to call your legislator and voice your support for bill H. 1712. You can help save lives by doing something in addition to staying in your home.

Abby Smurzynski is a rising senior studying Public Health and Biology at Brandeis University. She has worked as an Emergency Medical Technician for four years for the Bethesda Chevy Chase Rescue Squad, serving over 40,000 residents.

James

Outdated Needle Exchange Programs: An Inefficient Use of State Money

Back in May of 2019, the Senate began discussing a \$5 million proposal to expand needle exchange programs and increase access to Narcan (a drug to treat opioid overdoses) for the 2020 financial year. After some debate, the spending expansion was approved. I mean, how could it not be? In the

past 20 years 17,500 Massachusetts residents have died from opioid related overdoses – enough to sell out Boston’s TD Garden. Since 2016, the death rate has risen to over 2,000 residents per year. Clearly, the opioid crisis is a relevant public health issue that state legislators, regardless of their politics, need to address in some manner. However, this \$5 million expansion is ultimately a waste of money as it funds outdated and inefficient infrastructure. Instead, Massachusetts should be funding safe injection facilities.

To be clear, I do not mean to say that needle exchange programs are worthless. In fact, needle exchange programs are effective in reducing health care costs associated with groups that use opioids. By providing clean needles, STI and HIV testing, overdose education, reduced risk counseling, referrals to substance abuse recovery services, and more, needle exchange programs significantly reduce health care costs. For HIV alone, needle exchange programs are shown to reduce transmission by 40%, saving \$758 in health care costs for every \$100 spent on needle exchanges.

That being said, needle exchange programs were not designed to combat the opioid crisis, and their results reflect that. Since 2015, the Massachusetts government has increased spending fighting the opioid crisis by \$36 million a year. However, annual death rates due to opioid overdoses have only decreased by 5%, or roughly 100 Massachusetts residents. That means that, in order to prevent 1 death due to an opioid related overdose, Massachusetts is spending an extra \$360,000 per year. Clearly, Massachusetts needs better infrastructure to more effectively address the opioid crisis.

Rather than increasing the funding to only somewhat-efficient needle exchange programs, Massachusetts needs to start using safe injection facilities. Safe injection facilities offer almost identical services to needle exchange programs, but simply more extensive. In addition to the needle exchanges, STI and HIV testing, overdose education, and referrals to substance abuse recovery services that needle exchange programs offer, safe injection facilities provide safe, sterile environments for people to use pre-obtained substances under professional supervision. In fact, they’re so similar that current needle exchange programs can be transitioned into safe injection sites in less than a week. In addition, more extensive services offered by safe injection sites increase health care savings drastically. Not only do safe injection facilities reduce HIV transmission by 85% and overdose death rates by 35% (which would translate to roughly 700 people a year), but they are more successful at connecting patients with drug treatment programs due to the trust built by providing supervision to patients. Overall, health care savings for transitioning a single needle exchange program to a safe injection site are estimated between \$3 and \$6 million (with \$3.5 just coming from healthcare savings on HIV).

Logically, one might wonder how much more safe

injection sites would cost. If they achieve significantly higher savings than needle exchanges, they must cost significantly more, right? Wrong. Currently, a single needle exchange program costs roughly \$2 million annually to run. By comparison, safe injection facilities cost \$3 million annually. Although a transition from needle exchange programs to safe injection sites would mean a 50% increase in upfront funding, this spending is made up for, at minimum, three times over from health care savings.

It’s time to stop using outdated, inefficient infrastructure to address Massachusetts’ opioid crisis. A switch from needle exchange programs to safe injection facilities would not only drastically decrease healthcare costs and save lives, but would stop wasting taxpayer money by spending it more efficiently. Voice your support for spending state money efficiently by reaching out to your legislators (found here: malegislature.gov/Legislators/Members/House) and urging them to support House Bill H. 1712

■ House Ways & Means Script

As the House Ways and Means Committee, it is your job to make sure that taxpayer money is being spent as efficiently as it can be. This applies especially to the current opioid crisis. Since the year 2000, roughly 17,500 Massachusetts citizens have died from opioid related overdoses – enough to fill TD Garden or the entire undergraduate population of Northeastern. Although Massachusetts has taken some action in an attempt to combat these death rates, current infrastructure is not sufficient enough to do so in an efficient manner. There is a solution, however: Bill H. 1712. Bill H. 1712 builds on legislation that currently allows towns and counties to opt in to needle exchange programs but in a way that allows communities to more successfully combat the opioid crisis.

Currently, Massachusetts is spending \$164.2 million a year combating substance abuse and misuse services. This money is primarily going towards needle exchange facilities, which provide HIV testing, STI testing, free needle exchanges, referrals to HIV/STI treatments, overdose education, risk reduction counseling, and referrals to substance abuse services (among other services). Additionally, \$1,020,000 a year is being spent to ensure naran is in homeless shelters and that the employees know how to use it to prevent an overdose. While this is a good initiative, dealing with overdoses is risky even for emergency responders, who are required to wear protective gear when dealing with those who overdosed so they aren’t exposed to any harmful substances.

Massachusetts is also spending \$488,735,614 annually on Adult Support Services (Adult Community Clinical Services, ACCS). The goal of the ACCS is to provide more comprehensive treatment, particularly for those suffering from substance abuse disorder and already works through

inpatient facilities, residential treatment programs, and community support services. While this is an amazing initiative, the ACCS only works if people are actually enrolling in them. Therefore, the more people that are referred to these programs, the more effective it will become.

Overall, Massachusetts is currently spending a lot of money trying to combat the opioid epidemic. While it is all being spent on good initiatives, overdose death rates have only declined 5% in the past 4 years. Clearly, some of these programs could be improved to achieve better results.

Where should the money be going?

While Massachusetts cannot be faulted for spending money on combating the opioid crisis, the money should be going towards Safe Injection Facilities (SIFs). SIFs allow people with substance abuse disorders to inject pre-obtained illicit substances under the supervision of trained medical professionals. These sites provide people who inject drugs with clean needles, access to counseling and information on treatment services. In total, SIFs are estimated to save between \$3 million to \$6 million annually.

Importantly, a single SIF is estimated to cost roughly \$3 million. However, this price can be significantly slashed by transforming a current needle exchange site, which provides very similar, although not quite as robust services. While SIFs are very similar in a number of the services that they offer and share common goals with needle exchange programs, they are more effective. Not only are SIFs significantly more effective at preventing the spread of HIV (needle exchange programs are only roughly 40% effective, whereas SIFs are roughly 85% effective) but transforming a needle exchange site into an SIF will save roughly \$3.5 million per site annually on HIV healthcare costs alone. As SIFs only cost \$1 million more than needle exchange sites do per year, SIFs clearly make up for their additional cost through HIV healthcare saving alone.

In addition to HIV savings, drug abuse treatment centers such as ACCS would become more effective, as 75% of patients at SIFs have reported positive behavior changes. What's more, 8.6% of patients at Boston's SPOT were connected directly to drug treatment programs. The key to these referrals being effective and people staying in the drug treatment programs is the patients trusting those who refer them. By being with the patient every step of the way and not just exchanging their needles, more trust can be built up between the patient and employee. This trust can then increase the rate of people referred to the drug treatment programs, as well as the rate of people who stick with them. Overall, with more people being referred to drug abuse treatment centers, these centers can become more effective at tackling the Massachusetts opioid crisis.

■ Conclusion

Overall, SIFs are a more cost effective way of tackling the opioid crisis than anything Massachusetts is currently doing. By spending a small amount of money initially to help transform needle exchange sites into SIFs, Massachusetts can save a significant amount of money for each year thereafter. As the Ways and Means Committee it is your job to ensure that the taxpayer money is spent as effectively as it can be. Clearly, needle exchange facilities are not the most effective way to spend the taxpayers' money, so we urge you to vote to pass Bill H. 1712.

■ Letter to the Legislator

Dear Representative Lawn:

As public health policy students, we are writing to request that you support H. 1712, which would allow for the formation of harm reduction sites in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. As someone who has previously supported equitable healthcare legislation such as H.3660 and H. 3556, we can both agree that healthcare is a right of all people. Equal access to healthcare includes people who use drugs. If passed, this legislation would prevent persons with substance use disorders from fatal overdoses, and provide them access to counseling, referrals to treatment, and other appropriate services.

Opioids are a damaging and harsh reality of the world in which we live. The Massachusetts Department of Health reported 1,543 confirmed opioid related overdose deaths in 2019 of which 93% involved fentanyl. While the total number of opioid related overdose deaths has decreased slightly since 2016, the number of non-fatal overdose emergencies continues to rise. This poses a risk to public safety workers such as police officers and fire and rescue technicians, and other emergency response workers. Increased personal protective equipment while responding to opioid related emergencies was mandated in 2017, but with the growing numbers of emergencies, the risk to emergency responders is still burdensome.

A way to reduce the risk to emergency responders is to implement harm reduction sites, which have shown to reduce overdose calls by as much as 68%. Harm reduction sites allow people with substance abuse disorders to inject pre-obtained illicit substances under the supervision of trained medical professionals, while also providing clean needles, access to counseling and information on treatment services. Since 2003, Vancouver harm reduction sites have reduced overdose deaths by 30%. In October of 2019, US District Court Judge Gerald A. McHugh ruled that harm reduction sites are lawful on the grounds that they are not intended to facilitate drug use. Many opponents worry that harm reduction sites will lengthen a user's "period of addiction." However, in a

Massachusetts program, SPOT, which monitors drug users after injecting opioids, 10% of users entered treatment after care.

Another common concern is an increase in crime and violence surrounding harm reduction sites. While drug use is commonly associated with violence and crime, women in the drug community in other countries such as Canada and Australia stated that harm reduction sites were a place to get away from the violence and were a sort of safe haven.

For the reasons we listed above, we strongly ask you to speak to your colleagues on the Committee of Mental Health, Substance Use and Recovery and urge them to vote H. 1712 out favorably. We implore you to protect the lives of those suffering from substance abuse disorders, the lives of police and fire and rescue workers, and the lives of those who have lost someone and feel that loss every day.

■ Excerpts from Campaign Journals

Abby

On meeting with Brian Rosman, Office of Senator Jo Comerford

Unknown to us until the beginning of the meeting, Brian taught for more than five years at Brandeis's Heller School and worked with Stuart Altman on MassHealth policy. This Brandeis connection allowed us to find common ground quickly. I had personally taken a class with Dr. Altman, and was familiar with his work and policies which made the meeting go more smoothly at the start, establishing good rapport.

Brian stated that the Senator would be supportive of the bill, when it eventually made its appearance in committee and we left feeling like Brian was much more informed and understood the bill's concepts and progression much more than when we arrived. James and I felt that we should have had a more clear way to end the meeting. Looking back now, I wish that we had been pushier and advocated stronger action on their part. In addition, I feel that we should have done more background research on Brian and not just the Senator. But overall, it was a positive meeting.

On meeting with Dave Swanson, Office of Sen. Cindy Friedman

Dave, James, and I discussed the fact that the bill is a placeholder, which was news to us at that point in time, and he suggested we meet with Senator Keenan and his aide who had been put in charge of rewriting the bill. Dave explained that the reason that the bill online was so vague and short is because it is simply a placeholder and that the real bill is being reworded and worked on behind the scenes. This meeting was incredibly valuable. It gave me and James insight into the legislative process and insight into where our bill actually was in that process; next to nowhere.

On meeting with Senator John Keenan and Abigail Kim

We made an incredibly good connection and learned more information during this meeting with Senator Keenan and Abigail than we did while researching for weeks writing our legislative report. Senator Keenan and Abigail are the point people in the redrafting of the bill. They have been to actual safe injection sites in Montreal and Vancouver and had spoken with the police and public health officials in these regions as well as having extensive relations with the police and public officials in Boston.

This meeting went extremely well. We learned so much and made an incredibly important connection. After the meeting we sent Senator Keenan and Abigail our revised legislative report and our storybook so that they could potentially use them for advocacy. We also scheduled another meeting with them for the following week because Senator Keenan agreed to speak about the drug consumption areas in Boston in our video.

James

On Meeting with Dr. Kolodny

As Dr. Kolodny has spent much of his life addressing the opioid crisis, and has been an advocate of Safe Injection Facilities long before I spoke to him, and I had only really just started working on the issue, the interview felt very one sided. A good example of this was when Dr. Kolodny explained to me that the word "addict" can be politicizing and to steer away from using this when talking about the bill.

On Meeting with Senator Keenan and Abigail Kim

Our discussion went on for well over an hour as we talked about both personal experiences with SIFs, our personal interests in the matter, all the various actions that would need to be taken, and possible steps to take in the future (including sending them our storybook and legislative research report). We ended the meeting planning to meet again when we visited the statehouse in two weeks.

■ Next Steps

Working on this bill in the midst of the Coronavirus is a difficult task, however, it is still feasible. Firstly, the bill currently in the committee is still a placeholder; the language of the true bill is still being reworked and final details being discussed with relevant parties. There have been no indicators from legislators on efforts toward getting SIFs funded in Massachusetts and how they would be financed. In the midst of the Coronavirus pandemic, the question of funding becomes a larger one, as the public health funds have been drained to the max and likely nothing will be left

for this program. However, when speaking with legislators in March, we discussed the feasibility of SIF infrastructure in urban areas and some current needle exchange sites would only take a matter of days to convert into these sites. The funding for increased medical personnel and equipment may prove challenging to find, especially in the current climate.

In addition to funding, the largest challenge this bill will face, even if it were to be enacted into law, will be backlash from the public. In Philadelphia, the first SIF had to be postponed because community members started protests and threatened riots. Education on this topic is of the utmost importance. We have seen an incredible increase in the knowledge that legislators have on SIFs and their benefits. Unfortunately, the general public is not as well informed. If met with the same backlash as in Philadelphia, this program will die before it has a chance to lift off the ground. This will require a monumental education effort in communities where these sites will likely be located. I would start in Central Square and Somerville. The bill will most likely have an opt in program, allowing most regulation and implementation to come from the municipal government such as the mayor and the city council. Educational efforts will likely need to come from advocacy organizations and the coalition MA for SES.

If we were to continue working on this project, we would reach out to MA for SES and collaborate educational efforts in these communities. It was not until meeting with our legislators in March that we were able to locate this organization, and due to the coronavirus we never established contact. I think that it would be great to work within a coalition and share our materials with them, especially our storybook and video.

Additionally, research needs to be conducted on how SIFs are functioning in the COVID-19 pandemic. Are these facilities still open? Are they implementing social distancing? Are they donating their equipment or medical personnel to the COVID-19 pandemic instead of SIFs? From the response of existing SIFs we can advocate for the implementation of these facilities even in these uncertain times. People who inject drugs are among the most vulnerable populations right now. They make up the majority of the Boston homeless population and are at an increased risk of being immunocompromised due to HIV. We would also like to look into the specific response that the Massachusetts needle exchange programs have taken during this time of crisis. If not opening an SIF, it is still of utmost importance to support public health. We need additional information on what the Massachusetts legislature is doing right now to support these Massachusetts citizens.

■ Update

As of 11/23/20: The bill was passed through the Joint Committee on Mental Health, Substance Use, and Recovery on May 18th and was sent to the Committee on Health Care Financing as H.4723/S.1134.

For more information

View the bill (MA legislature website):

H.1712: malegislature.gov/Bills/191/H1712

“Raise the Age” to be Tried as a Juvenile for Non-Violent Crimes

Extend the age that a person facing trial for non-violent crimes can go to juvenile court and juvenile prison. This applies to those who are between the ages of 18-20.

Lawrence Sabir '21

Kyle Shedden '20

“An Act to Promote Public Safety and Better Outcomes for Young Adults” H3420 / S825, more commonly known as the “Raise the Age” bill, aims to combat recidivism by increasing the age of criminal majority, allowing for schooling and rehabilitative programming in juvenile facilities to be enforced upon emerging adults to the age of 21. A young adult’s brain is still in its developmental stage, which means that an individual may make irrational choices that result in involvement with the corrections system. While the brain is still malleable and able to be hardwired in different directions, the ability to give young people education and structure is essential so that they do not find themselves repeating bad habits as they get older. Emerging adults (people aged 18 to around 25) make up 10% of the state’s population but represent more than 29% of arrests. They also represent the highest rate of reincarceration (76%) within three years of being released initially. With the age of criminal responsibility raised to 21, Massachusetts will have the means to help its citizens get the support and structure they need, while reducing the number of incarcerated individuals in Massachusetts.

■ The Bill

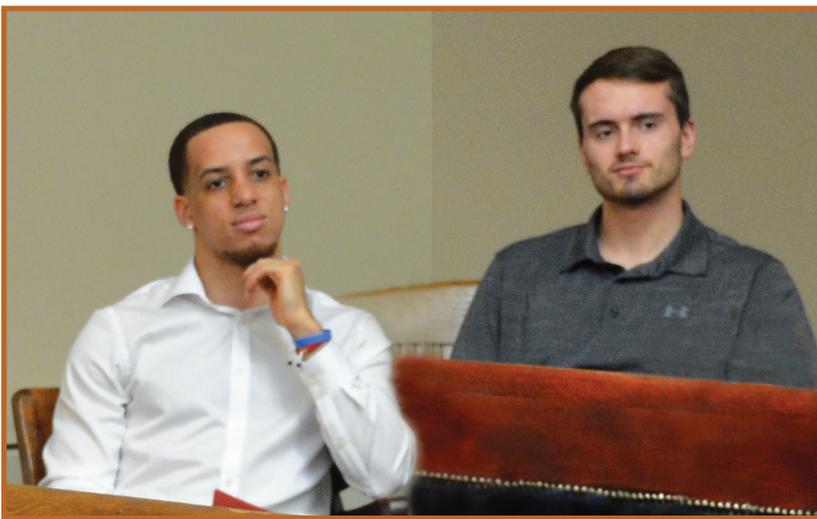
S.825/H.3420: An Act to promote public safety and better outcomes for young adults

■ Elevator Speech

I believe, as I’m sure you do, that children’s well-being should be a priority in the state of Massachusetts. Did you know the frontal cortex, the decision-making part of the brain, isn’t fully developed until the age of 25? Or that in Massachusetts, 76 percent of 18 to 24-year-olds released from prisons were re-arraigned within three years of release? There is certainly a problem with being jailed in the same capacity as adults. Given that young adults don’t yet have the brain development allowing them to fully gauge their actions, how is it fair that they be punished to the same

degree as people who do? The answer is it isn’t fair, and legislators have introduced this bill for that reason. The proposed bills, S825 and H3420, can guide emerging adults to make smart decisions so that they stay out of the system and contribute to their community in the long run.

In a nutshell, this bill addresses the problem of keeping young offenders up to the age of 20 out of the adult criminal justice system, and instead rehabilitating them at the juvenile level. It provides more developmentally appropriate approaches and systems for young adults, which will educate young people, help the Massachusetts economy, and lower crime



Lawrence Sabir and Kyle Shedden

rates. Shifting young adults into the juvenile system will lower recidivism and prevent deeper criminal justice system involvement. Guiding young adults involved in the justice system through their transition into adulthood is crucial. If you believe in justice here in America, I encourage you to vote favorably on this bill to represent the best interests of emerging adults and the commonwealth as a whole.

■ Excerpts from Storybook

A woman was sent to jail at 18 after spending the majority of her life in the Department of Youth Services. Her parents were both taken to prison when she was young, leaving her without a structure and emotionally scarred. Her trauma as a child led to the impulsive behavior which landed her in jail. Had she been subject to a juvenile prison, she would have received some of the help she was in desperate need of, instead of being put behind bars without ever having a chance at success in life.

“Exposure to toxic environments such as adult jails and prisons further traumatizes justice-involved emerging adults, making them more vulnerable to negative influence, and as a result, increases recidivism among this group. Tailoring the justice system’s response to emerging adults’ developmental needs can reverse this cycle of crime and improve public safety.” – Lael Chester of Columbia University

■ Op-Ed Kyle

During these unprecedented and trying times in the United States and the world, we must recognize that legislative decisions are going to influence every one of us. The senators and representatives of Massachusetts are not alone in this country in scrambling to pass legislation and secure funding to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. That being said, in this time of uncertainty, with all the attention on COVID-19 (deservingly so), we must remember the vulnerable populations who will be hardest hit. We must remember to shine light on young people in the Commonwealth. Massachusetts House Bill 3420 and Senate 825 entitled “An Act to promote public safety and better outcomes for young adults,” better known as the Raise the Age Bill, involves people under the age of 20 being sent to prisons with adults.

Bill H3420/S825 addresses the issue of people right out of their teens being incarcerated in the same spaces as fully grown adults. This bill aims to keep emerging adult offenders up to the age of 20 out of the adult criminal justice system by housing them in the juvenile system rather than the harmful environment of typical adult penitentiaries. With current COVID-19 outbreaks within jails all around the country, the dangers within adult prison take on a new life.

The juvenile justice system provides more developmentally appropriate approaches and systems for young adults. For example, they have programs to educate young people, which can help the Massachusetts economy and lower future crime rates. If the legislature passes this bill and young adults are shifted over to the juvenile system, the positive outcomes will manifest throughout the Commonwealth. This bill will lower recidivism and prevent heightened criminal justice system involvement, while simultaneously providing more developmentally appropriate methods and systems for young adults.

Aside from the variety of benefits to be afforded to the state as well as to the emerging adults in consideration, this shift in policy just makes sense. Think about current age benchmarks passed by the US government regarding the use of alcohol and tobacco. Both are prohibited for anyone under the age of 21. Or, if substance use policy isn’t your cup of tea, take a look at car insurance rates or the health insurance proposed under the Affordable Care Act. Car insurance companies have much higher premiums for people under the age of 25 because researchers know that the impulsive decision-making part of the brain isn’t fully developed until the age of 25. Similarly, youth can stay under their parent’s health insurance policy until the age of 26. These selected ages, especially in the case of car insurance, are not just arbitrary numbers; they are researched based upon intense evaluations to achieve the best age with the lowest risks to themselves and to others.

Given this, how and why would it make sense to imprison a 20-year-old whose brain has hardly differentiated itself from that of an 11th grader in the same capacity as a 45-year-old who rationalized against their fully developed brain? To me, the answer is clear: it doesn’t. As someone who is a college student, I cannot imagine some of the hardships and negative influences people around my age are subject to in these prisons.

In 2013 Massachusetts got its foot in the door on this issue by raising the age of criminal majority to 18, but more is needed to be done to fix this problem. Emerging adults’ brains are especially susceptible to adopting habits and retaining new information, which can certainly be a double-edged sword. On one hand, if this bill doesn’t become law and kids 18+ are sent to adult prisons, they will continue to enter harmful environments potentially creating hardened criminals and repeat offenders. On the other hand, if the legislature passes this bill, these same individuals can join the juvenile system where they will be given an increased chance to be educated and rehabilitated. They will be able to contribute to their families and communities in a positive way for the duration of their lives.

Although battling this pandemic is at the forefront of our political agenda, this bill is still relevant, especially for

troubled teens who just need a push in the right direction. Reach out to your respective senator or representative and ask them to vote favorably on H3420 or S825.

Lawrence

Every child needs to be fostered in a solid community, so they have the ability to succeed in life. There are so many aspects that influence a child's development. Children's relationships with parents, teachers, family, neighbors, coaches and friends all affect their development. At a young age, children are supposed to learn what is, and is not acceptable for them to do. These relationships they have in their early years have a crucial impact on their future success.

Putting children in positive social and emotional environments will help them create good relationships and experiences. If they are in problematic environments surrounded by negativity, this could have a detrimental effect on children's social, intellectual, and emotional development. The environment and relationships we provide children with will determine the people they become, and how they will achieve in life.

Imagine being a child of a single mother who's living in a dangerous low-income environment. Imagine this child notices his mother is struggling financially. On his way to school, someone offers him a way to make quick money by doing something illegal. The thought of helping his mother is the only reason he would consider agreeing, knowing it is wrong. This is the beginning of a child becoming a product of his environment because he has been influenced by the wrong people. This is common in low-income communities because these children have no resources to help them see their own potential. Money and material possessions are their focus, because they have nothing. Being in this environment, you can be accused of committing a crime just for being black. I know this because I have witnessed others go down this path; it leads to being involved in the criminal justice system, and having problems at school and at home. That's the worst-case scenario, but this is a prime example of how an environment and relationships can affect their long-term development.

Brain development plays a role in a child's behavior because the poor cerebral cortex and uncontrollable stress functions lead to more impulsive behavior. There need to be more youth development programs implemented in these communities to prevent these problems. We can make a positive influence by building relationships, and by offering financial assistance, social events, career fairs, academic support, and safe places for children to play. Schools need to inform teachers of how to deal with children who are showing signs of bad behavior. A lot of these children are dealing with trauma, drug problems, mental disorders, and abuse. This

can all factor into a child showing signs of impulsive behavior. When they are in school their trauma can be mistaken for bad behavior, as being a "bad" or mean kid. Particularly for teachers, the best response is to be sensitive to addressing those traumas.

A child's future depends on their surroundings starting at a very young age. We need to provide children with positive environments that will allow them to give back to their communities one day.

■ House Ways & Means Script

TO: Chairman Aaron Michlewitz

FROM: Kyle Shedden and Lawrence Sabir

CC: Vice Chair Denise C. Garlick; Assistant Vice Chair, Elizabeth A. Malia; and the House Ways and Means Committee

SUBJECT: In Support of Bill H.3420 / S.825 (An Act to promote public safety and better outcomes for young adults)

Chairman Michlewitz, my name is Kyle Shedden, I am a resident of Spencer, MA and a senior at Brandeis University. I am alongside my classmate, Lawrence Sabir, a resident of Waltham and a student at Brandeis as well. Over the course of this year, Lawrence and I have been advocating for House Bill 3420 and Senate Bill 825: "An Act to promote public safety and better outcomes for young adults" otherwise known as the "Raise the Age" bill. Representatives James J. O'Day and Kay Khan are spearheading this bill on the House side, while Joe Boncore is presenting it in the Senate. As the Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, your support is essential in getting these bills voted out favorably, and we hope that you will help us to do so.

The "Raise the Age" bill covers an exceedingly important issue at the intersection of criminal justice and education of youth in the Commonwealth, while helping to reduce housing costs incurred at prisons. At the current age of criminal majority, teens are being forced behind bars for making poor choices the minute they turn 18. Studies prove that the frontal cortex, the decision-making part of the brain, isn't fully developed until the age of 25. Given that young adults don't yet have the brain development allowing them to fully gauge their actions, how is it fair that they be punished to the same degree as people who do? This bill will allow for behavioral rehabilitation on young people whose brains are still malleable and susceptible to change, helping them to stay out of the system and contribute to the wellbeing of their families and their community as a whole.

While gradually raising the age of criminal majority from 18 to 21 over a multi-year period, this bill gives emerging adults a chance of bettering themselves and their communities via rehabilitation and education offered within

the juvenile justice system. The educational offerings of the juvenile system far exceed those of any program currently in the adult prison system, and with the rehabilitation programs the juvenile system offers, emerging adults can get their lives on the right track, steering clear of the criminal justice system in the future. With the current law, 76 percent of 18 to 24-year-olds released from prisons were re-arrested within three years of release. With every additional person going back to prison, the state and its taxpayers are burdened by the cost of court proceedings, lawyer fees, and about \$30,000 a year of holding costs. Mr. Michlewitz, you have the ability to help lower this rate substantially and help the lives of thousands with a favorable vote on this bill, while reducing the overall costs incurred at tax funded penitentiaries.

As the chair of the House Ways and Means Committee, I understand you may have potential concerns about the cost implications of H.3420 & S.825. I hope to remedy your apprehensions by providing several facts and pointers as to how these bills won't be fiscally burdensome but would actually be beneficial. Beginning first with addressing funding concerns, as you may know, the Department of Youth Services (DYS) has had an upward trend in funding over the past several years in Massachusetts, even while the total number of people held in the juvenile system has decreased. As it stands, DYS funding trends account for a growing rate of people within the juvenile justice system, so if this growth was to be the case, there should be no issue in DYS funding.

In a more in-depth look at the financial implications of this law, the end results of raising the age of criminal majority will reap numerous benefits in the Commonwealth – including cutting costs. The involvement of people with the justice system comes at a high cost to the state, e.g. costs incurred by law enforcement, jails, courts, prisons, and more. Rehabilitating emerging adults in the juvenile system will reduce costs in the long run when considering specific factors such as costs of housing prisoners and the compounding expenses of recidivism.

From an additional standpoint, jail for even a few days can ruin a person's life by costing them their job and health care or disrupting their education. Not only does being locked away inhibit any hopes of one's contributing to their community, the consequences of having a prison record hinders a person's ability to secure jobs and make a proper living for themselves and their family. Having the chance to educate emerging adults in the juvenile system will not only benefit them in turning their life around, the state will also reap the benefits from each tax dollar paid from a rehabilitated adult's future earnings. The more contributing individuals in a society, the better functioning the society's economy. If voted into law, this bill will not only cut costs, it will increase tax revenue significantly.

In 2013, Massachusetts took its first step in fixing our criminal justice system, when the legislature raised the maximum age for juvenile responsibility from 17 to 18. In terms of the increased age benchmark, Massachusetts isn't the first state to consider raising the age further to 21. In fact, our neighbors to the north, Vermont, passed a bill to raise the age to 21 back in 2018. From a practical standpoint, increasing the age of criminal majority makes sense, and facts back up this claim. Since Massachusetts raised the age to 18, juvenile crime has declined by 34%, with the recidivism rate of those affected falling as well.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for taking the time to read our words. I ask for you to please vote it out of committee favorably. By backing this bill, you are acting in the best interest of the juvenile justice system and the commonwealth as a whole.

Thank you,
Kyle

■ Letter to the Legislator

Dear Representative Stanley,

My name is Lawrence Butler-Sabir, and I am writing to you along with Kyle Shedden. We are residents of Waltham, Massachusetts, and students at Brandeis University. Kyle and I appreciate all the work you have done in Waltham to improve public safety. We are currently working on a team pushing for the state of MA to raise the age of criminal majority from 18 to 21. The specific bills we are advocating for are S825 and H3420 entitled, "An Act to promote public safety and better outcomes for young adults".

These bills seek to address the problem of keeping young offenders out of the criminal justice system and focusing on helping with their rehabilitation. Young adults do not yet have the brain development allowing them to fully understand the gravity of their decisions, and yet they are being held to the same level of responsibility as adults. Being in the age range that the bill seeks to remedy, I understand the power of one decision but being in this age group, and I know and see in my peers that our decision-making skills are still forming. Decisions we make at this age should not change the entire trajectory of our lives.

The "Raise the Age Bill" is the solution to this issue. This bill will keep young offenders up to the age of 20 out of the adult criminal justice system, and instead rehabilitate them at the juvenile level. Providing more developmentally appropriate approaches and systems for young adults will educate young people, help the Massachusetts economy, and lower recidivism.

Some individuals believe this bill will create more problems for juveniles and put more pressure on the criminal justice system. In passing this bill, the effects will

inherently be found in the judicial system. With the age change, emerging adults up to the age of 21 during court proceedings will be subject to the juvenile protections and measures that are not provided in the adult system. This bill also allows them to still have a future, with the majority of identified collateral consequences of imprisonment being related to employment. Individuals with criminal convictions are less likely to receive callbacks for interviews. A single decision made as a child shouldn't determine one's ability to be a successful worker.

Guiding young adults involved in the justice system through their transition into adulthood is crucial. The "Raise the Age" bills S825 and H3420 have been referred to the committee on the Judiciary. If you believe in justice here in Waltham, I encourage you to vote favorably on this bill – to represent the best interest of emerging adults and the Commonwealth as a whole. I have provided our contact information below. Please do not hesitate to reach out to discuss any questions that you may have.

Thank you,
Lawrence Butler-Sabir

■ Excerpts from Campaign Journals

Kyle

On meeting with Senator Anne Gobi

Our meeting lasted a little over an hour, and I felt that it was informative and beneficial. Although the senator was not a fan of the bill, even after I raised several reasonable points about the benefits of it, she said she would consider our conversation if this bill made it to the floor to vote and agreed to meet with me again on the next class trip to the State House. Given this was my first time meeting formally with an elected member of Massachusetts' Senate, I felt as though I had learned quite a bit about a senator's thought process, which was useful in learning how to solidify an argument for this bill.

Meeting with David Berthiaume

It was useful to have an opinion of someone who would generally be on the opposite side of the aisle as a Republican. The point he raised about drastic changes made me look into the matter and wonder if jumping to 21 really is the right move to get this passed, or if going one year at a time is more practical from a legislative perspective.

Lawrence

On meeting with Senator Creem's Aide, Brittany Webb

You could tell she was on the same mission as us with advocating for justice for these young adults. She knew all the factors that play a role in a young adult's involvement with

the criminal justice system including brain development, trauma, toxic environments, abuse, impulsive behavior, and more. Everything that we studied about juvenile justice throughout the semester she already knew and provided us with additional information. I appreciated how Ms. Webb told us the truth when we questioned.

On meeting with Rep. Berthiaume

I felt like we made a great connection with Mr. Berthiaume. He is a perfect example of someone who doesn't agree with the bill publicly but is a supporter of rehabilitating disadvantaged youth. He gave us a great outside perspective on how the bill is viewed by someone who doesn't support the bill.

■ Next Steps

Excluding the circumstances that have arisen due to the COVID-19 pandemic and assuming the reporting date of May 12th gets extended, this bill has a steep uphill battle in getting enough votes to become law. If I were to continue working in advocating for this bill, I would spend my time raising public awareness of the issue at hand, and continue my efforts lobbying in the State House, along with undertaking other awareness-raising strategies.

As mentioned in our research report, a recent Massachusetts bill aiming to increase the age of criminal majority to 19 was struck down before having a chance to impact and improve the lives of an extra year of juveniles. Although there has been momentum from universities and scientific research since then, I still do not believe the general public, nor the majority of legislators in this state would back S.825/H.3420 on its face. From a personal standpoint, I wasn't even aware of my state's aim to increase the age of criminal majority to 19 back when it was last up for vote. On top of this, before choosing to advocate for this bill, the only knowledge I had about it was from reading a few articles from local newspapers such as the *Worcester Telegram* and *Boston Globe*.

Nonprofit organizations that advocate for juvenile justice are one of the strongest supports the bill has. These organizations provide information to residents of Massachusetts to support the bill, spreading awareness to individuals of the outcome that sending a young adult to an adult correctional facility can have. We need more people to share their opinions in letters to the committee and to their legislators. This will reduce crimes in communities and will benefit young adults who are still developing. Collaborating with programs that provide fair access to legal representation, seeking to reform the structure within the prison system, provides rehabilitation assistance post-incarceration, and working to mitigate inequalities in sentencing and imprisonment will be beneficial.

Supporting programs that provide young adults with a positive role model is another step forward. Working with Big Brother or Sister programs that focus on rehabilitating misguided youth is a great idea. The results from these programs that focus on addressing these juvenile issues will help the bill. I have personally been in a big brother program, and they provide youth with the opportunity to be matched with a local mentor along with advantageous local resources based on the mentee's individual needs and interests. These resources enable youth to learn from their mentor and have access to resources that they otherwise would not have access to that will enhance their ability to succeed in their future endeavors, whether those be higher education or the workforce. Additionally, these programs recognize the possibility of trauma or maltreatment being experienced by youth of different backgrounds and therefore aim to create strong and supportive relationships with mentors that will advocate and support them in their academic and social lives. These programs diminish the school-to-prison pipeline while building bridges for future generations of youth.

Having our support structure continue to grow will always be the biggest step. Informing people of the issues will create empathy for people to advocate for youth that have less. The individuals we need to make aware of this issue the most are middle and upper-class individuals. They may be opposed when they first hear the bill because their children will never deal with the issues of juvenile justice. But if we display the results of low-income child involvement in our criminal justice system, people in more privileged demographics might come to support the bill.

College students can make a difference on campus. Recruit people through grassroots efforts. Talk to students and residents of Boston and Greater Boston who are directly impacted by these issues. On a college campus of hundreds of students I can advocate and look for allies. Showing that everyone is facing their own obstacles will create support through compassion and education. We need to make individuals notice what we are doing now is not working. The state is spending an enormous amount of money putting these young adults into prison, creating terrible outcomes for young adults and the communities of Massachusetts. Using our voice will always be our best move because eventually we will be heard.

With this taken into account, if I were to change any aspect of this bill, I think I would consider taking a step back by re-proposing to raise the age to 19, instead of a gradual rise to 21. Although I believe 21 is an adequate age to achieve eventually, the three year jump comes with increased skepticism from those on the fringe of the issue, and certainly from people against it completely.

■ Update

As of 11/23/20: The bill is in the joint Judiciary Committee and was given a reporting deadline of November 12th. On November 16th, the Judiciary Committee issued a study order on 19 bills, including S.825.

For more information

View the bill (MA legislature website):

S.825: malegislature.gov/Bills/191/S825

H.3420: malegislature.gov/Bills/191/H3420

Transitioning Massachusetts to 100 Percent Renewable Energy

Thoughtfully re-powering Massachusetts and ending the use of fossil fuels within the Commonwealth

Benée Hershon '20

Kate Laemmle '20

Ben Silver '20

The bill will address climate change through an overall reduction of emissions as Massachusetts aims to transition to 100 percent renewable energy. The bill has two crucial target years: 2035 and 2045. By 2035, the bill sets the goal of obtaining 100 percent of the electricity consumed by all residents, institutions, and businesses to operate from renewable energy sources. By 2045, the bill aims to meet 100 percent of Massachusetts' energy needs with renewable energy sources. The bill supports the completion of these goals through the establishment of various councils and research bodies that provide a just transition to renewable energy jobs, research the most economic and efficient methods, and determine what legislative actions must be taken across various fields to ensure 100% renewable energy.

■ The Bill

S.1958/H.2836: An Act transitioning Massachusetts to 100 percent renewable energy

■ Elevator Speech

Hello, our names are Benée Hershon, Kate Laemmle and Ben Silver. We are current environmental studies students at Brandeis University. In addition to being residents and voters of the commonwealth, we also plan to dedicate our careers to the environment. We can all agree that it is our collective responsibility to plan for the health, safety and well-being of our communities and of future generations. Massachusetts has always been a leader of change. In 2017, Boston emitted 6.1 million metric tons of fossil fuel. Over the past decade East Boston neighborhoods have repeatedly flooded, the Massachusetts lobster catch has decreased by 85% and annual snowfall averages continue to decrease. We have truly started to see the impact of climate change in our own backyard. If we fail to act

now, 90,000 homes in Massachusetts valued at \$63 billion could face chronic flooding by the end of the century. H.2836, the 100% renewable bill, holds the promise of new jobs, protecting our communities and standing on the right side of history. Fossil fuels are the primary contributor to climate change. By reducing emissions and investing in renewable energy, Massachusetts can mitigate our climate inaction fate. We ask that you vote this bill out favorably on Thursday June 4, 2020 and urge your colleagues in the Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy to follow suit. Together we can ensure a safe, healthy, and promising future for the commonwealth.



Kate Laemmle, Benée Hershon and Ben Silver

■ Excerpt from Storybook

“If we wait, we will have to change by disaster, rather than by design.” – Sabine von Mering, 350 Mass Advocate and Director of German and European Studies at Brandeis University

■ Op-Ed

Ben

My name is Benjamin Silver and I am a senior at Brandeis University. As a young person looking ahead to the future I view climate change as one of, if not the most, significant dangers to Massachusetts. Sea level rise, causing in turn the melting of the polar ice caps, threatens all of Massachusetts’ coastline as well as Boston itself. In a worst-case scenario, sea levels could potentially rise by more than 10 feet by the end of the century, which could plunge 30% of Boston underwater. In order to avoid seeing hundreds of thousands of people displaced from their homes and lives, we need to work together towards a solution. The driving cause of these environmental threats to the commonwealth is the consumption of fossil fuels. Fossil fuel emissions contribute to the rise in global average temperature, speeding up the process of sea level rise. Instead of seeking to address the symptoms of climate change we must seek to address the root causes. This monumental task will require a shift away from fossil fuels and towards renewable energy sources and energy efficiency technologies. Sustainability, environmental protection, and clean energy are issues important to a great deal of young people across the state.

In order to successfully combat this threat, we must undertake the large task of shifting away from fossil fuels and towards renewable and more efficient means of energy production. Young people are not the only ones who feel this way. The Massachusetts House of Representatives is currently reviewing a bill with a more stable and sustainable future in mind. House Bill 2836: An Act re-powering Massachusetts with 100 percent renewable energy, has an ambitious yet reasonable timeline for transition. During the drafting process, special care was taken to ensure all measures possible be applied so as to eliminate as many of the hardships and costs associated with this piece of legislature as possible for citizens of the commonwealth. The bill will create various new committees composed of experts from a selection of fields and research studies. These new positions will work to ensure each industry or sector has a unique implementation plan so as not to overlook the challenges of this task. This bill does a great job of walking the line between ambition and reality and is designed to help Massachusetts residents and business as much as possible to make the transition. Beyond that, the legislative proposal was planned with the objective of being minimally damaging

to the environment as well. It is my firm belief that this bill is the best bet on a cleaner, less turbulent, more efficient future.

However, before this bill can be made into law it must successfully pass through all the complex stages of the legislative process. Currently the bill is being studied by the Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy. The bill has been there for some time and needs our help to keep it moving along the road to becoming law. Please reach out to your local legislators and House Representatives in support of this bill. I know it sounds far-fetched, but just reaching out can go a long way. It might make a legislator act and vote differently if they think their constituents really care about a particular issue. A letter in support of Bill H.2836 would let your legislator know that this issue is important to you as well as let them know they are being carefully watched. The more letters we can get to members of the committee in support of the bill, the better the chances are of a clean and sustainable future for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Part of the beauty of our democratic system of government is that it gives everyday people a chance to have their voices heard. ‘We the people’ need to be heard now more than ever with respect to a clean and sustainable future. Silence is the forfeiture of your right to be heard, let us be heard. Send out House Bill 2836 favorably from the Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy.

Benée

Climate Action Now! We brought Covid-19 upon ourselves

I was walking around my neighborhood today for the 20th time this week. Waving to neighbors in medical masks, maintaining a six-foot distance as they scurried away in fear. Apparently coronavirus can also be spread through eye contact and a wave? Why does it suddenly feel as if we are all in a scene straight out of the *Mad Max* franchise? Empty grocery store shelves, doomsday prepping, and empty roads. As an environmental studies student, when I first heard that coronavirus had the potential to be the next global pandemic, I immediately thought of a connection to our behaviors which also fuel climate change. Our constant use of natural resources, the same use that has fueled climate change, has also led to the latest plague: Covid-19.

You may be sitting, drinking your quarantine coffee and thinking, “Why is this college student making this about climate change? People all over the world are sick and dying from Covid-19!” Words cannot fully express what a tragedy this is for so many people; as the daughter of a nurse, I know how terrible this virus truly is.

As you sit in your home quarantining and signs of spring begin to emerge in New England, you may even notice small critters roaming around your home. The other night we found about four stink bugs exploring the living room, when my mom exclaimed, “Why can’t they just stay outside?!” Probably because the construction of our home took away their habitat... just an idea?

As the human population continues to grow, we have had to take natural resources from our planet to support us. We are fracking for gas and oils, mining for coal, cutting down beautiful old-growth forests for residential properties and dumping toxins and plastics into our ocean so they don’t ruin the view of our manicured lawns. This taking of natural resources is what contributes to greenhouse gas emissions, fueling climate change.

We keep on growing and wanting more and we do not realize the harm we are doing to ourselves and to our planet. According to the CDC, Ebola originated from human contact with a bat, the Black Death from rat fleas, and scientists are currently studying how Covid-19 exposure possibly originated due to human contact with a pangolin or another animal. If you look back at history, our deadliest diseases have origins in human contact with animals. As we continue to deplete natural resources and cut into the habitats of these animals, we will continue to repeat this deadly pattern.

The next few months of this outbreak, especially in the United States, will determine a lot about our planet’s future. Massachusetts has the opportunity to change our behaviors, and in turn our climate legacy. In 2017, we emitted 6.1 million metric tons of fossil fuel. Every time we take something new, humans are constantly exposing themselves to new pathogens. The taking of natural resources has become so normalized, that we don’t even realize what we are doing. These climate change fueling behaviors jeopardize our public health. In a state with over 64 hospitals, with over 20 being in the Boston area alone, that matters.

H.2836, An Act transitioning Massachusetts to 100 percent renewable energy, has the potential to reverse this fate. Let’s utilize natural resources in a sustainable way! In addition to protecting us all from disease, changing our behaviors and taking action against climate change will prevent the damage of over 90,000 homes in Massachusetts that are subject to flooding by the end of the century due to sea level rise. The United Nations projects that the green economy will create 24 million new jobs worldwide by 2030 (keep that in mind as our country is about to face another recession). Less disease, a dry home and a booming economy, what’s not to like?

I am calling on you, as you are stuck in quarantine, sipping your coffee and pacing in circles, to call your representative. Call your senator! Ask them to vote this bill out favorably on Thursday, June 4, 2020, or ask them to urge their

colleagues on the Joint Committee on Telecommunication, Utilities and Energy to do so! We are all going to be stuck in quarantine for the foreseeable future, might as well make this time meaningful.

But no stress on making that phone call! Quarantine may be the new reality for the rest of the century. Climate inaction, specifically our failure to stop robbing the earth of natural resources, has the potential to make the deaths of hundreds of thousands of innocent people a commonality.

Benée Hershon is a current senior at Brandeis University studying Environmental Studies, Legal Studies and Social Justice & Social Policy. Benée grew up in Framingham, MA and hopes to pursue a career in the environmental field. In her free time she enjoys exploring the woods with her dog, gardening and procrastinating on her thesis.

Kate

Now is the Time to Make Our State Green

The world looks like a scene out of a post-apocalyptic movie. In the backdrop of an economic recession and the exponential rise of Covid-19 related deaths, the air and water are clearing, the sky is turning blue, and there are global drops of carbon dioxide emissions. Birds are chirping in cities, dolphins are returning to Venice, and the earth is seemingly getting a chance to breathe. Now is the time to take advantage of this momentum and take action to heal the planet.

However, any decline in pollution is not a justifiable silver lining for the loss of human life. And we are not solving climate change with a global pandemic. Scientists warn the sharp decline of pollution and carbon emissions is short-lived, and that any short-term changes will do little to alleviate the climate crisis. Any drop in emissions will be replaced by a dramatic spike once things return to “normal.”

However, Massachusetts, and the country, has an opportunity to dictate that new normal. As the Covid-19 pandemic continues to grow, 6.6 million Americans sought unemployment benefits just last week. More than 180,000 of them were residents of Massachusetts. Although Congress just passed a \$2.2 trillion stimulus package, there is still plenty of need from the state to take action. Massachusetts has the opportunity to rebuild the economy while simultaneously decarbonizing it, by supporting green stimulus measures that foster economic growth.

As our country has begun to demand systematic change surrounding paid-sick leave, healthcare, and unemployment insurance, we can also demand change surrounding our current fossil-fuel driven economy. Such action can be achieved through the passage of House Bill 2836, “An Act Transitioning Massachusetts to 100 percent renewable energy.” The bill provides a necessary framework for both a sustainable future and the improvement of economic welfare.

Now is the time to expand clean energy infrastructure and promote energy efficiency improvements. When Massachusetts moves to re-stimulate its economy, it should not look at locking in fossil fuel energy. Now is the time to encourage lower emissions through financial incentives for the placement of heat pumps and the renovation of buildings.

Furthermore, clean energy has the dramatic potential to encourage significant job growth. Employment in wind and solar energy is currently outpacing job creation in the coal industry. In 2019, clean energy workers represented 3% of the state's workforce. As technology rapidly improves, renewable energy is yielding greater efficiency and more job opportunities. Mayflower Wind, a Massachusetts-based energy producer, is predicted to provide Massachusetts residents over 10,000 jobs alone. The passing of the 100 Percent Renewable Energy Bill will help create thousands of desperately needed local jobs in this recession.

When we rebuild our economy, we need to prepare for a different upcoming crisis: climate change. Unlike the rapidly evolving Covid-19 pandemic, we still have time to prepare for the potential detrimental impacts of climate change. Rising sea levels, air pollution, warming temperatures will lead to thousands of premature deaths and cause billions of dollars of damage in Massachusetts alone. While we have the opportunity, we can continue to have blue skies and rebuild our economy. H. 2836 currently sits in the Joint House Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy. Call your local representative by June 4, 2020 and ask them to vote the bill out favorably.

Kate Laemmle is a former Research and Education Intern at the New England Aquarium and an Environmental Studies and Politics student at Brandeis University.

■ House Ways & Means Script

Mr. Chairman Michlewitz,

Our names are Kate Laemmle, Ben Silver and Benée Hershon. We are current environmental studies students at Brandeis University and are residents and voters of Waltham and Framingham. Over the past few months, we have been working on bill H. 2836: An Act transitioning Massachusetts to 100 percent renewable energy. As someone who was born and raised in the North End, you have seen first-hand the damage caused by increased flooding that is already affecting your constituents' neighborhoods. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, sea levels have risen almost 8 inches since 1870 and have the potential to rise more than three feet by the end of the century. In a worst-case scenario, sea levels could potentially rise by more than 10 feet by the end of the century, which could plunge 30% of Boston underwater. Beyond flooding, other significant risks that could affect you and your constituents include extreme storms,

increased heat waves, and ruination of the state's agricultural and fishing industries.

Across Massachusetts, the impacts of climate change are already having profound effects on the economy, public health, water resources, infrastructure, coastal resources, energy demand, natural resources and recreation. Climate change is a significant threat that we must seek to combat at its source. The primary cause of climate change is the emission of greenhouse gasses through the use of fossil fuels. These gases are emitted in large quantities through a number of our industries including energy and transportation. In order to take a step towards a more sustainable, less turbulent future, we must commit to 100% renewable energy by the year 2045.

House Bill 2836 seeks to ensure the best environmental, public health and economic future possible for the Commonwealth and its residents. By transitioning to 100% renewable energy and phasing out fossil fuels we will be combating climate change's source, not its symptoms. The bill requires energy utilities to have fully transitioned to 100% renewable power by 2035 so as to make the final transitions easier for other affected parties by 2045. This bill is an investment in the future that seeks to improve the quality of life through advancing public health, energy security and economic stimulation. The bill requires the formation of a variety of new committees, institutions and assessments designed to ensure lowest cost of transition to 100% renewable power. It calls for state agencies and departments to create a detailed plan on how to meet the target. The bill calls for these plans relatively quickly, within six to twelve months of the passage of the bill.

Opponents of H.B. 2836 point to the lack of specific funding techniques and cost estimates as reason to squash this bill. However, it is not uncommon in 100% renewable energy legislation to not state an exact cost, such as bills passed previously by New York and California. It should be understood that this bill provides the important framework necessary for the transition to renewable energy, establishing important councils and research organizations that will work to maximize environmental and economic benefits. This bill provides necessary adaptability and flexibility for the state to address the ongoing costs of climate change. Regardless, it will cost less to mitigate and plan now, rather than wait for thousands of premature deaths and billions of dollars in damage.

While it is true that opposition to this bill highlights its potential for large costs, the benefit of energy security and economic stimulation in the green economy cannot be overlooked. As of 2018, the clean energy, or "green" economy is a source of four million jobs, and the United Nations predicts that by 2030 the new green economy could create 24 million jobs worldwide. Employment in wind and

solar energy is currently outpacing job creation in the coal industry. As of 2019, there are over 111,000 clean energy workers in Massachusetts, representing over 3% of the state's workforce. Mayflower Wind, a Massachusetts-based energy producer, alone is predicted to provide Massachusetts residents over 10,000 jobs. Opponents of the bill may also argue that the transition to clean energy will displace workers. However, H.2836 specifically seeks to promote employment growth and access to jobs in the renewable energy field through the establishment of a council for clean energy workforce development. The council ensures the fair and just transition to renewable energy, prioritizing opportunities for "residents of environmental justice communities, minorities, women and workers displaced in the transition to clean, renewable energy." A clean energy workforce development account will further benefit fossil fuel workers displaced by the transition, providing training opportunities for new green economy jobs, education and job placement assistance.

There is also opposition from some environmental organizations who argue that this bill is not ambitious or aggressive enough, that the transition needs to happen quicker or that additional actions beyond the scope of this bill are also required. We feel that this bill does a good job of walking the fine line between being overambitious and not taking adequate action to protect the commonwealth from a damaging and unstable future.

Renewable energy technology is another area that has seen incredible growth in the recent past. Use of solar panels and wind turbines has greatly increased. In the last decade the use of hybrid and electric vehicles has dramatically increased. These technologies are still improving, yielding greater efficiency or increased range.

Across the country, more than 150 cities, more than 10 counties, and seven states have already adopted 100% clean energy goals. California, Hawaii, Maine, Nevada, New Mexico, New York and Washington have all called for plans that boost clean energy within the next few decades and understand the importance of investing now in renewable and clean energy. Many states have included plans for a worker-centered transition that ensures the creation of jobs necessary to build a clean future are good paying and high quality. Massachusetts can join these states and pass House Bill 2836, seeking to ensure the best environmental, public health and economic future possible for the state. We ask that in order to prevent future flooding in the North End and across the state that you vote this bill out favorably. This is the first step to ensuring a sustainable and secure future. Thank you for your time and for the important work that you do for the commonwealth.

■ Letter to the Legislator

Representative Maria Duaine Robinson
24 Beacon St., Room #22
Boston, MA 02133

Representative Duaine Robinson,

I hope this letter finds you well. My name is Benée Hershon and I am a senior at Brandeis University studying environmental science. In addition to being a student who cares deeply about the environment, I am from Framingham and am the third generation of my family to live and grow up here.

This semester, I have been working to support HB 2836, An Act transitioning Massachusetts to 100 percent renewable energy.

As a student who plans on dedicating my career to the environment, this bill is especially important to me, but is also important to the future of the commonwealth. We can all agree that it is our responsibility to prepare for the safety of future generations. We are already beginning to see the impacts of climate change in Massachusetts as East Boston continues to experience flooding and the amount of annual snowfall reduces as each year goes by.

By the end of the century, Boston is likely to experience a 25% higher increase of sea levels than any other part of the country. Across the entire commonwealth, 90,000 homes, valued at \$63 billion, could face chronic flooding as a result of climate inaction.

Fossil fuels are the primary contributor to climate change. This bill seeks to reduce emissions and invest in renewable energy. By doing so, Massachusetts can mitigate our climate inaction fate.

I know how important this bill is to you, someone who has dedicated her career to regulating issues on clean air, water and renewable energy.

Although the bill is certainly radical and will require immense funding, it is better to take action now than to wait and have to adapt to disaster as it occurs. Preparation and prevention is certainly less costly than response and repairs.

Some fear that with a new green economy, thousands of workers could lose their jobs as industries are transformed. The bill holds great promise for opportunity and new jobs as a result of the new green economy. The bill also states the prioritization of maximizing employment opportunities for workers displaced in the transition to a green economy.

Massachusetts has always been a leader in radical legislation, for example equal marriage. If Massachusetts takes a stand against climate change, other states will follow suit.

I thank you for the work that you do that benefits not only the entire commonwealth, but specifically my family and friends that you represent in Framingham. I ask that you speak to your colleagues in the Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy and ask them to vote this bill out favorably on Thursday June 4, 2020.

Best,
Benée Hershon

■ Excerpts from Campaign Journals

Ben

On meeting with Rep. Meschino

Representative Meschino was very interested in understanding why young students are interested in this bill and seemed surprised to learn that we support this bill because we feel it addresses root systemic problems rather than fixing Band-Aids on the symptoms. I think she respected that we had done our homework on the issue. There are two key lessons that I took away from this first meeting with Representative Meschino. Firstly, if you make a personal connection it is worth a few minutes of your meeting to develop that connection. She was much more willing to engage with us on matters regarding our bill once she knew who we were a little better. Secondly, it is important that people understand why you support something not just that you support it. People want to know your motivation so that they feel they can trust you more.

On all meetings

[The meetings I participated in] taught me a great deal about advocacy work in the real world. Unexpected things happen both for the good and the bad and it is up to you to go with the flow and make something of the situation. Advocacy is complex work that requires a delicate touch and great people skills. Before this class I thought of the legislature as a highly regulated practice; however, what this course and these meetings came to make me understand is that at the end of the day we are all people and if you can get through to the right person you can make substantial beneficial changes for everyone.

Benée

On meeting with Senator Mark Pacheco

This year, I have written a thesis focusing on flooding in farming communities. I was able to use information from this experience to relay the threat of erosion and sea level rise that will occur in those communities if we Massachusetts fails to act on climate change. Kate and Ben also used their interests to inform the senator on marine issues and land issues that will result from climate inaction. In this moment, I realized that as

students in the environmental field, we have a lot of power in informing representatives who may not know all of the facts about climate change. Relaying this knowledge is crucial in engaging representatives about the importance of the bill.

On meeting with 350 Mass

Some group members were a bit confused about what I was representing and why I was only in a group with two other students doing this work. During this meeting I realized the importance and power that coalitions have. I wish that I had attended a chapter meeting earlier in the semester.

Kate

On phone call with David Corbie, Boston Outreach Manager of Greenovate

My conversations with Mr. Corbie outlined that a significant amount of progress has been made in the environmental community in recent years. Until recently, the climate movement was predominantly led by older, white activists. Over time, the movement has become much more inclusive and diverse, measured by both the people that lead the movement and the actions taken by climate action groups to support the most vulnerable communities. However, there is a continued need to create a strong and active network of people, to ensure that progress is equitable, and that space is created within the community and the state house to talk about environmental justice. Overall, my main takeaways from my conversation with Mr. Corbie is that a lot of progress has happened in recent years that has allowed bills like H.B 2836 to include environmental justice language, but the need for community engagement outside of legislative acts is still needed to ensure that such language is followed.

■ Next Steps

As Covid-19 has dramatically impacted all of our lives and the legislative process, it seems that H. 2836 may expire this legislative session. Although the bill may expire, momentum for a green and sustainable future has picked up in the midst of the pandemic. The pandemic has brought to our attention the significant influence of human beings on the environment, as global fossil fuel emissions drop due to nationwide quarantines.

The 50th anniversary of Earth Day, which took place on April 22nd, 2020 has also served as an important reminder of the threat of climate change and the importance of emergency preparation. On April 18th, 2020, to kick-off the celebrations for Earth Day, United States Senator and Massachusetts native Ed Markey stressed the importance of the Green New Deal and the push for 100% renewable energy in Massachusetts.

Online activism among relevant and influential coalitions, including the Sunrise Movement and Massachusetts 350, has persisted and flourished throughout the pandemic. It seems that coalitions are more determined than ever to push through environmentally conscious legislation once the pandemic is over. Throughout and following the end of the pandemic, it is crucial that coalitions continue to call attention to this legislation promoting 100% renewable energy. As we look to a better future in the wake of Covid-19 it is imperative to harness as much momentum as possible. While we have not been able to meet in person, meetings are still occurring.

When the bill is renewed for the next legislative session, it will be crucial for the bill to specify estimated costs for the implementation of various councils, as well as funding estimates through taxation. Currently, one of the largest gaps in the bill is that it does not address the source of funding. The Massachusetts Clean Energy Center's clean energy workforce development account and the many research organizations that will be formed as a result of the bill will require significant funding to be effective. While we can look to the passage of similar bills in other states to estimate the cost of implementing H.2836 in Massachusetts, there is a current lack of specification of important funding mechanisms for H.2836 that is necessary for the bill to be realistically considered.

Another large gap which the bill must address as it moves through the legislative process is how businesses, residential properties, and municipalities will be held accountable to meet the 100% renewable energy goals by 2045. Currently, the bill does not elaborate on what the consequences would be for private residents and businesses if they are not in compliance with recommended renewable energy goals. Enforcement of the bill must be further explored to ensure that when the bill is passed it will be successful. Both a "carrot" and a "stick" could be specified in a new write up of the bill, such as tax breaks to businesses who successfully implement renewable goals, or fines to businesses that fail to make significant progress towards being powered by renewable energy.

The bill must also address the cost burden of implementing renewable energy on residential properties, especially low income properties. While previous legislation has been passed in the state that looks to reduce the cost of installing heat pumps for low income residents, the bill must address further action when residents and businesses cannot afford to make the transition. For example, there is legislation currently in the works that looks at reducing the costs of installing solar panels in low income communities. As Covid-19 impacts our economy, it will be crucial to find funding and affordable options for property owners.

Another way to potentially reduce the cost for residences of implementing renewable technologies such as solar panels

is through net metering. Net metering is a process by which excess electrical production on residential land is sold back to electricity utilities at a wholesale price. This process would allow homes that are producing more energy than they consume to offset their cost through the sale of their excess electricity.

The bill must also address potentially necessary exceptions to the 100% renewable energy bill for various institutions if renewable energy technology does not progress enough in the next three decades. For example, hospitals are required have a backup generator capable of meeting their energy needs for multiple days or even weeks at time. Unfortunately, there is a likelihood that renewable energy technology may not be able to progress enough to store energy at that capacity for lengths of a time, thus hospitals may have to occasionally run on generators powered by fossil fuels. While renewable technology is expected to progress exponentially in the new few decades, the bill should address where exceptions may be granted for certain extreme scenarios.

In conclusion, House Bill 2836 has a few areas that still require some attention, but is well on its way to becoming legislation. Some areas that still need refinement are funding, enforcement, necessary exceptions, and the burden on citizens. While the bill has these issues still to iron out, it will undoubtedly be resubmitted for the next session. The bill has carefully thought out and agreed upon language already, and should not have trouble being sent to a committee to be reviewed. It is there, in terms of advocacy, that the next steps will truly be taken. When in-person meetings can resume, advocates will have to continue to schedule meetings to make sure legislators know that people are still behind a greener, more sustainable future.

■ Update

As of January 2021: The bill passed both the House and the Senate as part of a major climate change and renewable energy bill, which Governor Charlie Baker vetoed on the last day of the legislative session. House and Senate leadership have stated their intention to immediately refile the bill in the next session and get it back to the governor's desk.

For more information

View the bill (MA legislature website):

S.1958: malegislature.gov/Bills/191/SD1625

H.2836: malegislature.gov/Bills/191/H2836

Organization or Coalition support:

Environment Massachusetts:
environmentmassachusetts.org

350 Mass: 350mass.betterfutureproject.org/

Driver's Licenses for Undocumented Immigrants

Allowing Massachusetts residents regardless of immigration status obtain driver's licenses in order to increase safety in mobility.

Rachel Dovek '20
Mayan Kleiman'20

Undocumented immigrants are unable to obtain driver's licenses under the current Massachusetts legislation. Undocumented immigrants living in Massachusetts live in constant fear while trying to live their normal daily lives, including driving to work, going to the grocery store, and taking to their children to the doctor. S.2061/H.3012, An Act relative to work and family mobility ("the Family Mobility Act"), aims to alleviate these struggles by providing all Massachusetts residents the ability to apply for driver's licenses, regardless of legal status.

■ The Bill

S.2061/H.3012: An Act relative to work and family mobility

■ Elevator Speech

Our names are Mayan Kleiman and Rachel Dovek and we are students at Brandeis University and residents of Waltham, which as you may know, is an immigrant community. We can all agree that we should support and protect the wellbeing of our communities, which benefit from having safer roads and safer drivers.

Currently in Massachusetts, undocumented immigrants need to drive to work, take their kids to school, and get to medical appointments. Today, these individuals don't have access to driver's licenses, which means that they also don't have access to driving tests or insurance. When these members of our community have to drive in order for their families to survive, they risk deportation and consequently family separation. One organizer from the immigrant advocacy organization Cosecha has explained that, "one of the first things immigrants say they need is a driver's license, sometimes even before papers."

Opponents to this bill argue that "undocumented" means without documentation; however, this legislation actually ensures that individuals must prove their identity with two forms of documentation. This legislation also does not encourage undocumented immigrants to come to Massachusetts; rather, it allows

current residents to contribute safely to their communities. Studies have shown that giving undocumented immigrants the right to obtain driver's licenses will reduce "hit-and-run" accidents dramatically. In California, which passed similar legislation in 2015, it was found that hit-and-runs decreased by 7% in the first year of the legislation's enactment. It is also estimated that revenue from RMV fees will generate \$6 million for the state and lower each Massachusetts driver's insurance premium by about \$20/year.



Rachel Dovek and Mayan Kleiman

We urge you to vote favorably and speak to the Ways and Means Chair, Senator Michael J. Rodrigues, in support of S.2061.

In California, where they passed a similar bill, likelihood of hit and run accidents has been reduced by 10%, thereby improving traffic safety and reducing costs for California drivers. Providing unauthorized immigrants with access to driver's licenses can create positive change for the communities in which they live. There is now a distinction between standard and REAL-ID compliant licenses, which means the licenses that undocumented immigrants would be able to apply for under this bill would not provide them with the same benefits as those that could be obtained by legal residents. This bill has been proposed many times before, so we urge you to have a hearing on this bill ASAP, because now, more than ever before, is the time to pass this bill.

■ Op-Ed Rachel

Driver's License Legislation to the Rescue of a Struggling Economy

The coronavirus is a pandemic affecting the world like we have never seen before. As of April 29th, more than three million people are infected worldwide with more than 200,000 deaths. The United States has implemented stay-at-home advisories, encouraged wearing masks and used other methods to mandate social distancing. The closure of non-essential businesses has impacted all economies including the Commonwealth's with unemployment rates surging and decreases in sales and income tax revenues impacting the state budget. In addition, the Commonwealth's decision to use its rainy-day fund to mitigate this public crisis creates an extreme need to generate more revenue and minimize any additional strains on the current budget.

Imagine your most stressful day, constantly late and running behind while driving all over the Greater Boston area. Now imagine this day without a driver's license, watching both your speed and the time simultaneously, glancing at your rear view mirror constantly to check for police officers despite your pristine driving record. An Act relative to work and family mobility works to alleviate these struggles by allowing undocumented immigrants to apply for driver's licenses while increasing revenue for the Commonwealth and increasing public safety overall while improving the well-being of our greater community. Today in Massachusetts, undocumented immigrants are unable to obtain driver's licenses under the current legislation. Regardless, undocumented immigrants are driving to the grocery store, the hospital and are continuing their everyday lives.

Undocumented and unlicensed immigrants do not have proper training and testing to ensure the safety of all our residents on the roads. Before the statewide stay-at-home

advisory, 78% of Massachusetts workers aged 16 and older got to work by car, truck or van – with 71% driving alone. These statistics highlight that despite not having licenses, the reality remains that undocumented immigrants have little choice but to be on the roads together with everyone else. Even in this crisis, many undocumented immigrants work at essential businesses, continuing to drive on the roads unlicensed.

An Act relative to work and family mobility allows all Massachusetts residents to apply for driver's licenses, regardless of legal immigration status. If passed, this legislation would significantly increase revenue for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts with individuals paying license fees and insurance premiums. Passing the legislation would likely generate \$6 million in state revenue over the first three years in fees and state taxes on insurance policies. More drivers in the insurance pool further lowers insurance premiums for everyone. While the legislation would lower each Massachusetts driver's insurance premium by about \$20 per year, it would also generate an additional \$62 million in revenue for insurance companies. This added revenue will help the state to bounce back from this devastating economic and health crisis.

In addition, this legislation has the power to increase safety for the commonwealth. Giving undocumented individuals access to driver's licenses strengthens public safety through a decreased number of hit and run accidents, increased number of knowledgeable and properly tested drivers, and drivers who can focus on driving rather than fearing getting caught. Improved road safety will allow the commonwealth to devote its resources to the health crisis and the subsequent economic recovery.

Some individuals are concerned with the legislation, as they believe being "undocumented" means having no documents or way to prove one's identity. However, this legislation has strict parameters requiring individuals to have two forms of identification, at least one with a photograph and one with a birthdate. Undocumented immigrants simply do not have documentation in the United States; yet, many of them have documentation from other countries and are required to prove this documentation to apply for a license at the Registry of Motor Vehicles.

At the moment, the Registry of Motor Vehicles in Massachusetts has significantly reduced its hours, locations and services to assist with social distancing. Despite the inability to enact the legislation immediately, the urgency of the legislation remains. When the stay-at-home advisory ends, the roads will fill up and the state economy will rebound with many undocumented immigrants returning to work. As part of our economic recovery, we cannot afford barriers in the way of returning to productivity. The need to pass this legislation is now. We need to work together to overcome this crisis. I ask you to call your state legislators and express the deep urgency

that accompanies passing An Act relative to work and family mobility. Undocumented immigrants deserve the right to obtain licenses to take part in mitigating the financial strain on the Commonwealth and to increase public safety during our return to normalcy.

Rachel Dovek is a senior at Brandeis University majoring Politics and Education Studies with minors in Legal Studies, Social Justice and Social Policy and Near Eastern and Judaic Studies.

Mayan

Support for Essential Workers in the Age of Covid-19

“Driver’s licenses are something everyone needs and wants” for mobility and for survival. These are the words of an organizer for Cosecha, a movement that fights for the rights of undocumented immigrants. Yet, for undocumented immigrants in Massachusetts, driver’s licenses are inaccessible under the current law.

During this pandemic, let me remind you that undocumented immigrants are performing much of the essential labor that is keeping us afloat: working in grocery stores, as janitors, in food production, and in hospitals. These individuals are critical during this crisis and since we will always need supermarkets, cleaners, farm workers and hospital workers, they will continue to be critical when it is over. In order to keep our communities safe, all employees considered essential need the ability to get where they need to go. With that said, ensuring that everyone, including undocumented individuals, has access to a driver’s license is necessary.

An estimated 50 percent of our nation’s farm workers, approximately 24 percent of maids and cleaners, and 4 percent of home health aids are people who are undocumented. Almost 17 percent of all healthcare workers are immigrants. These workers are here because they fulfill the needs of our communities. Studies show that in most of Massachusetts, driving is essential for getting to work, so these workers need a reliable way to get there. However, under current Massachusetts law, undocumented immigrants don’t have access to driver’s licenses. S.2061/H.3102—An Act relative to work and family mobility would remedy this by allowing all residents to apply for a driver’s license, regardless of legal status.

Everyone would benefit from S.2061/H.3102. Research shows that undocumented immigrants contribute billions each year to our economy. In Massachusetts alone, undocumented immigrants contributed \$8.8 billion and paid an estimated \$184 million in taxes in 2016. Giving undocumented immigrants the ability to obtain driver’s licenses would allow them to contribute even further to our economy. A report from the Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center found that passing this legislation would raise state

revenue by \$6 million as more residents pay for licenses and auto registration. What’s more, as more residents join the insurance pool, each Massachusetts driver’s insurance premium will drop. This is good news for everyone.

Similar bills have already been passed in 15 other states, where studies show that this measure would also likely increase public safety. In California, hit-and-runs decreased by 7 percent. Since more drivers would go through the process of getting a driver’s license, more drivers would subsequently enter the road having been tested, increasing public safety.

We need the work that undocumented immigrants are performing and we need them to have the means to get there to do it. Driver’s licenses would make accomplishing this work a great deal easier, and potentially save lives right now.

This legislation is urgent so I encourage you to take action. Call your representatives and tell them why their support of An Act relative to work and family mobility matters to you.

Mayan Kleiman is a senior at Brandeis University majoring in International & Global Studies and Sociology with a minor in Economics.

■ House Ways & Means Script

Representative Michlewitz,

As you represent the Third Suffolk District, which comprises multiple Boston neighborhoods, your residents surely know Boston traffic first-hand due to a high volume of cars on the streets. As you grew up in the North End and are dedicated to helping others through a career in public service, you understand the importance of keeping the Greater Boston and Massachusetts community safe.

An Act relative to work and family mobility aims to improve public safety and the well-being of all residents in the commonwealth. Today, undocumented immigrants in Massachusetts are driving their children to school, driving themselves to work, driving to the grocery store, and driving to the hospital – all without licenses. Undocumented and unlicensed immigrants do not have proper training and testing to ensure the safety of the roads. Notably, 78% of Massachusetts workers aged 16 and older get to work by car, truck or van – with 71% driving alone. Even in the urban Suffolk County, 48% of people rely on personal vehicles – 41% of those driving alone. These statistics highlight that despite not having licenses, the reality remains that immigrants have little choice but to be on the roads together with everyone else for their and their families’ survival.

An Act relative to work and family mobility allows all Massachusetts residents the ability to apply for driver’s licenses, regardless of legal immigration status. While the pool of residents permitted to obtain Massachusetts driver’s

licenses would be expanded, the requirements to obtain a Real ID would remain unchanged. This legislation would increase public safety in the Commonwealth. This is accomplished through a decreased number of hit and runs, increased number of knowledgeable and properly tested drivers, and drivers who can focus on driving rather than a fear of getting caught. Currently, many undocumented immigrants are afraid of being pulled over and being deported for a minor traffic violation; drivers in fear do not make safe drivers. This legislation has already been passed and successfully implemented in fifteen other states. A 2017 Stanford University study found that California's law to expand licenses to undocumented immigrants led to improved traffic safety partly by reducing the number of hit-and-run accidents. This legislation expanding access to drivers' licenses has been proven to increase safety on the roads.

In addition, this legislation will increase revenue for the commonwealth. Massachusetts would raise its revenue from individuals paying fees to obtain licenses. Passing the legislation would likely generate \$6 million in state revenue over the first three years in fees and state taxes on insurance policies. Insurance companies would also benefit from this bill, since more drivers would begin paying for coverage. More drivers in the insurance pool further lowers insurance premiums for everyone. A recent study showed that the legislation would lower each Massachusetts driver's insurance premium by about \$20 per year. It would also generate an additional \$62 million in revenue for insurance companies. Moreover, immigrants are a crucial part of the Massachusetts economy as a whole. Thus, creating a more welcoming environment with more opportunities, such as the ability to drive to the store or to work, also has economic benefits for the commonwealth. In 2016, approximately 185,000 undocumented immigrants lived in Massachusetts, which made up about one-fifth of the immigrant population. In that year, undocumented immigrants contributed \$8.8 billion to the Massachusetts economy and they paid an estimated \$184.6 million in state and local taxes. Simply put, the fiscal implication of the bill is an increase in revenue to the commonwealth. As economic growth of the commonwealth has been one of your legislative priorities since elected, this revenue generating legislation should be appealing to you. The short-term clerical burden of processing additional driver's licenses is clearly offset by this increased revenue.

Opponents of the legislation have argued that being an "undocumented" immigrant implies that a person does not have documents, meaning that it would actually be impossible to prove an undocumented individual's identity. However, proponents of the bill point out that "undocumented" simply means that an individual has no proof of legal residence in the U.S. In fact, many have documents that prove their identity; and the bill itself lays out exactly what types of

documents would become acceptable for getting a driver's license. Massachusetts residents who wish to take advantage of the new law would need two forms of identification: at least one with a photograph and one with a date of birth. The first type could include either a valid international passport, or a consular identification document. The second form could be a driver's license from another state or territory, a Massachusetts identification card, an original birth certificate, or a valid employment authorization document issued by US Citizenship and Immigration Services. These opponents raise no financial concerns for the commonwealth and are instead concerned simply with the processes.

We urge you to vote this piece of legislation favorably out of the Ways and Means Committee. This bill ultimately increases revenue and public safety for the commonwealth and contributes to its economy.

■ Letter to the Legislator

Dear Senator Barrett,

Our names are Rachel Dovek and Mayan Kleiman, and we are students and residents of Waltham. In Waltham, as well as in the state of Massachusetts in general, driving is essential for survival and mobility. Yet, as Waltham residents, we have seen first-hand the impact that the inability for undocumented immigrants to apply for driver's licenses has on communities. As a cosponsor, you may be aware that S.2061, An Act relative to work and family mobility, aims to increase overall public safety and the well-being of the immigrant community, benefiting the entire commonwealth, by allowing residents to apply for driver's licenses regardless of legal status.

Today, undocumented immigrants in Massachusetts are driving their children to school, driving themselves to work, driving to the grocery store, and driving to the hospital – all without licenses. Undocumented and unlicensed immigrants do not have proper training and testing to ensure the safety of the roads. Giving undocumented individuals access to driver's licenses strengthens public safety through a decreased number of hit and runs, increased number of knowledgeable and properly tested drivers, and drivers who can focus on driving rather than fearing getting caught. Currently, many undocumented immigrants are afraid of being pulled over and being deported for a minor traffic violation; drivers in fear do not make safe drivers.

In addition to increasing safety in the commonwealth, this legislation will also raise revenue for the state. Massachusetts would collect additional revenue from individuals paying fees to obtain licenses. Insurance companies would also benefit from this bill, since more drivers will begin paying for coverage. More drivers in the insurance pool further lowers insurance premiums for everyone. Opponents to this bill argue that "undocumented"

means without documentation, however, this legislation ensures that individuals must be able to prove their identity with two forms of identification, one that includes a date of birth and one with a photograph.

This legislation has been proposed multiple times over the last decade, but this is the first time the bill has successfully left the Transportation Committee. The legislation now has the momentum to finally bring road safety to the entire commonwealth, as well as provide security to thousands of individuals and families.

As a cosponsor, we greatly encourage and appreciate your support of this legislation. In the Senate Ways and Means Committee, we urge you to vote favorably on S.2061, An Act relative to work and family mobility.

Sincerely,

Rachel Dovek and Mayan Kleiman

■ Excerpts from Campaign Journals

Rachel

On meeting with Aaron Agulnek of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston

Something we were concerned about at the beginning of this class was whether we could become good allies and advocates for this bill as two white, Jewish girls. Aaron explained how it is crucial to utilize our privilege to uplift the voices of impacted communities who may not have a seat at the table. He explained that ending anti-Semitism cannot just be the job of the Jewish community; but it belongs to the entire community. Similarly it cannot just be the responsibility of impacted communities to fight; but instead the entire population has to come together to make a difference.

My meeting with Aaron gave me a great perspective on how to be a good ally on a bill I care deeply about, and how to explain to others why this bill is important to me as a Jewish person. Furthermore, I learned a lot about remaining positive and patient in this type of work, as we covered how this bill has been around for 12 years. He also explained to me how there is an unspoken rule that it typically takes 10 years for a bill to get passed and how this type of immigration bill might take even longer.

Mayan

On meeting with Michael Munchbach of Senator Brady's office

It was one of our last meetings of the day and I felt that Rachel and I hit our stride during this meeting. Though we had arrived at the State House feeling knowledgeable about our bill, we lacked a more concrete plan for the order in which we wanted to say our points and who would plan to say what. However, in between running from meeting to meeting, we worked it out.

Afterward, the staffer commented on how he was impressed with our knowledge of the bill and that he found the details about increased revenue very appealing. Evidently, it was essential that we knew that Senator Brady sits on the Ways and Means Committee and that we catered to any concerns he might have as a committee member. I left the meeting feeling much more confident in Rachel's and my ability to convey our message effectively.

■ Next Steps

Unfortunately, due to the situation regarding the coronavirus, work in the legislature on bills unrelated to the pandemic has largely paused and many NGOs have mostly shifted their focus for the time being. Thus, it is unclear at this time whether An Act relative to work and family mobility will have a chance to make it out of the Senate Ways and Means Committee during this legislative cycle or will have to wait for another. This is particularly ill-timed for this legislation, because after a decade-long struggle, the bill had finally gained traction and momentum this year. The challenge, if we were to continue working on this bill would be to rebuild that momentum. We would plan to work closely with Cosecha and the Moving Families Forward coalition in order to continue to mobilize concerned citizens to bring attention to this crucial piece of legislation. However, direct and immediate aid for those affected by the pandemic has taken over the concerns of most immigrant rights groups, including Cosecha. Still, this bill is just as crucial during the coronavirus crisis as it will be once it is over, so we still believe that it would be timely to pass this bill this year.

As we learned this semester, the bill would need a supermajority to pass, due to Governor Baker's opposition and expected veto. First, however, it is necessary to move the bill out of the Senate Ways and Means Committee, where it is currently. Right now, 8 out of 18 Senate Ways and Means Committee members are sponsors of the bill. Potential committee members who are not already sponsors of the bill that we would focus on contacting would be Senators Michael Brady, Nick Collins, Barry Finegold, Anne Gobi, and Michael Rush. We would also plan to ask committee members who are sponsors but are less vocal to urge their fellow committee members to vote the bill out favorably. These individuals would include Senators Jason Lewis, Joseph Boncore, Michael Barrett, Adam Hinds, and Eric Lesser. We might also continue to remind Senators Joan Lovely and Patricia Jehlen, who have been vocal supporters of the bill, that there are Massachusetts residents expecting them to help push this bill out of committee. Right before the coronavirus outbreak, Cosecha had begun the process of identifying target legislators. If we were to continue working on this bill, we could also support Cosecha by focusing on those individuals. These include a number of Democratic legislators in the House, such as

Representatives Carolyn Dykema, Brian Murray, Thomas Walsh, Ed Coppinger, Michael Day, Paul Donato, Kate Hogan, Patrick Kearney, David Linsky, Jerald Parisella, and Jeffrey Roy.

As part of our contact with the Ways and Means Committee, it would be crucial to urge legislators to restore the safeguards that were removed in the Transportation Committee. In the original version of the bill, section four included restrictions regarding sharing information on documents provided for an application for a license. In addition, this section prohibited discrimination based on the type of identification card or license held by an individual. These measures are crucial to the safety of undocumented immigrants seeking driver's licenses. In order to ensure that undocumented immigrants' information is protected, this component of the bill would need to be re-added before it passes into law.

If we were to continue advocacy for this bill, we might also consider working more closely with the groups in our class who have been working on the Safe Communities Act. This could allow us to share stories and find out if and how our coalitions have been working together. We would also continue to seek out the voices of immigrants themselves. Early in the semester, we attended a hunger strike organized by Cosecha and supported by Never Again. While there, we hoped to talk to individuals affected by the legislation, but at the time we were nervous, did not yet know what our questions were, and did not yet know how to offer concrete ways to help. If we could continue working on this legislation, we might try becoming more involved and attending more Cosecha and Never Again events.

Moreover, as we are both from states that have passed similar legislation, California and New York, we would consider connecting with coalitions and groups in our home states that have been successful in order to utilize their methods of advocacy that may also be successful in Massachusetts. Our fight for immigration rights does not stop here and we plan to be actively involved in this legislation when the legislature is able to refocus its energy and attention on non-coronavirus pieces of legislation.

■ Update

As of 11/23/20: An Act relative to work and family mobility is currently in the Senate Ways and Means Committee, where it has been since April 21, 2020.

For more information

View the bill (MA legislature website):

S.2061: malegislature.gov/Bills/191/S2061

H.3012: malegislature.gov/Bills/191/H3012

Organization or Coalition support:

Cosecha: lahuelga.com

Protecting Undocumented and Other Vulnerable Residents

Ensuring that Massachusetts police resources are used to fight crime, not assist in federal immigration enforcement

Emily Arkin '20

Irma Zamarripa '21

Since the implementation of the current federal administration, Massachusetts has not passed legislation to protect its immigrant communities. Because of this, as violent racist rhetoric has increased within our government and across the nation, so too has a paralyzing fear amongst immigrants and their loved ones. This fear of our government, and therefore its officials, has created a deep-rooted mistrust within immigrant families of emergency services and local law enforcement. These worries and skepticism are validated when local law enforcement officers are deputized by ICE for immigrant arrests. The lack of legislation on this matter has created an environment where active community members are unable to report crimes, even when they themselves are the victims. This puts immigrants and their loved ones at higher risk of being victims of crime by making them especially vulnerable to wage theft, domestic violence, sexual assault, untreated medical conditions, and more. The Safe Communities Act addresses these urgent concerns by ending local law enforcement's involvement and partnership with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), ensuring the protection of basic human rights for undocumented immigrants, and mandating new uniform guidelines instructing officers on how to interact with both non-citizens and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

■ The Bill

S.1401/H.3573: An Act to protect the civil rights and safety of all Massachusetts residents (The Safe Communities Act)



Irma Zamarripa and Emily Arkin

■ Elevator Speech

Our names are Emily Arkin and Irma Zamarripa, and we are residents of Waltham. As you are a member of the Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security, we can all agree that health and safety are some of the top priorities amongst the residents of the commonwealth. Today, immigrant children and residents in Massachusetts, regardless of immigration status, are afraid to call 911, seek emergency medical care, and report crimes that they have seen or experienced for fear of themselves or a loved one being reported to ICE. When people are afraid to trust our local law enforcement, all of Massachusetts is less safe. As Hispanic women, and children and family members of immigrants both documented and undocumented, we grew up knowing this fear. Waltham is an immigrant community; our neighbors feel this fear too. The Safe Communities Act would work to rebuild trust between the community and our local police by ensuring that our law enforcement is here to protect all Massachusetts residents, instead of doing the

work of the federal government. All Massachusetts families and residents would be positively impacted by this change. We ask that the Representative support the Safe Communities Act and encourage his/her colleagues to vote it favorably out of committee. Thank you very much for your time.

■ Excerpts from Storybook

“All people want safer communities... [The Safe Communities Act] will, in a very practical way, make our state safer because people will not be afraid of cooperating with law enforcement. We want that kind of cooperation. At the end of the day this is a win-win, particularly because we will ensure safety and adequate use of our resources.” – Jonathan Paz, Waltham City Councilor for Ward 9

Abusers are keenly aware that survivors are now too afraid to report abuse and therefore they continue to use the threat of deportation against their victims. This bill will allow REACH to craft viable safety plans for survivors and their families. – Maria Pizzimenti, Director of Advocacy for REACH Beyond Domestic Violence

I go to school and come back thinking what will happen if my parents are not home? – testimony of a teenager from the bill’s hearing in February 2020

■ Op-Ed

Emily

How the Safe Communities Act is Even More Pressing During COVID-19

These trying times have affected all of us. With that in mind, these dark times of social distancing and unparalleled germaphobia have also provided many with insight into the vast disparities amongst Americans – it’s no secret that this crisis does not affect everyone equally. Barriers to health, safety, and stability disproportionately affect those who cannot public services. Immigrants have been some of our most necessary heroes during this national crisis. Providing medical care, performing field labor, sanitizing buildings, even hand-delivering groceries to our families, our immigrant communities are in many ways the backbone of our society in these trying times. Furthermore, this population will be essential in rebuilding our devastated economy in a post-COVID world – but only if the commonwealth protects their well-being.

Immigrant populations in the U.S. have been hit especially hard by the need to social distance, as they are disproportionately represented in industries characterized by dense workplaces and thus hugely impacted by the virus, namely medical care, childcare, and the food service

industry. Moreover, immigrants in this country already have little access to healthcare benefits and are on average less likely to seek emergency medical care for fear of deportation by Immigration Customs and Enforcement (ICE). As one immigrant advocate from the MIRA coalition shared, “The current anti-immigrant sentiment has created a climate of fear in immigrant communities, unlike what we’ve experienced before. Immigrant families are choosing to live in dangerous situations, foregoing applying for food stamps, housing, and healthcare.” The nationwide fear sparked by this pandemic is heightened by fear of being deported. Few industries in Massachusetts can afford to lose such significant and critical members of our workforce during this pandemic. In fact, business owners are overwhelmingly in support of the bill. In a recent interview with *The Bay State Banner*, Larry O’Toole, CEO of Gentle Giant Movers, shared that “Foreign workers are absolutely key to our existence. These are great people who are committed to living in the U.S. But there are so many obstacles put in their path. They live in terror.” Our healthcare industry, in particular, will not survive such a loss of immigrant labor.

In order to contain this pandemic, all who are affected by the virus must be able to access testing and obtain effective care. However, COVID-19 emerged just after the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) began enforcing a new rule that made immigrants even more fearful of using local police and emergency healthcare services. This creates a perfect storm. Although ICE supposedly announced a shift in detention policies to primarily focus on public safety, there has been no confirmation of a decrease in the number of detained persons. In contrast, on March 21 the population in detention rose. We also saw confirmation of infections among detainees. This further deters the immigrant community from reaching out to seek medical testing.

Studies show that when immigrants feel safe in their communities, they are more likely to fully participate in services available (ambulances, emergency rooms, local law enforcement, etc.). The Safe Communities Act seeks to protect the public safety of Massachusetts by allowing immigrants the safety to utilize public services like local police and emergency healthcare. In practice, the bill protects the civil rights of all Massachusetts residents by ensuring our state public safety staff are not being deputized to aid in the deportation of our community members. During these troubling and scary times, it is imperative that Massachusetts elected officials act to uphold our values while guiding us out of this crisis. It’s time for Massachusetts as a whole to step up and show our support for all who reside here.

Anti-immigrant sentiments weaken our ability to collectively fight this pandemic and thus endanger the wellbeing of us all. Now more than ever we need to unite, across Massachusetts and throughout our country, to demand

limits on ICE. We need protection for immigrants regardless of documentation status. Equitable access to healthcare is the only way out of this mess. The Safe Communities Act is more important now than ever before. Please call your legislator today and ask that they report the bill out favorably and urge their colleagues to support the bill as well. Even if your senator or representative already supports the bill, it never hurts to thank them for their support, and remind them of this bill's utmost importance. All of Massachusetts must unite to collectively conquer COVID-19.

Emily is a senior at Brandeis University majoring in Communication Studies and minoring in Social Justice and Social Policy. She is studying the Safe Communities Act as part of an experiential learning course, Advocacy for Policy Change.

Irma

A Promising Solution to COVID-19 Chaos in Massachusetts: The Safe Communities Act

Rosa, an undocumented immigrant from Guatemala, walked home from school with her six-year-old son. As they spoke about their day, the child saw a police officer walking near them. Suddenly, he whispered to his mother “Momma stop speaking in Spanish because he might stop you and deport you” (Velasquez, 2020). This is a heartbreaking reality faced by many children of undocumented immigrants. They understand the implications of looking and sounding different around police officers who fail to protect them and communities across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. No one should have to live in fear, and everyone’s civil rights should be respected.

This situation has only worsened due to the quick spread of COVID-19 over the past few months. Today, thousands of residents have suffered numerous consequences of this pandemic especially communities of color and immigrants of all statuses.

In a recent virtual town hall meeting with Senator Bernie Sanders, DACA recipient Perla Silva discussed how the pandemic presents additional challenges for undocumented immigrant communities. For Perla’s family, it has caused several hardships. Due to the economic impacts of this pandemic, most of her household is now unemployed. Without a steady income, they are worried about how they will afford basic necessities such as rent and groceries. Furthermore, COVID-19 took her mother’s life, adding the additional stress of causing them to also worry about medical and funeral expenses.

Many families across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts are experiencing similar challenges. As many undocumented immigrants do not have health insurance, they fail to seek medical assistance, because they are afraid of getting reported

to ICE officials. Moreover, they are concerned about covering medical costs, since many of them are unemployed and financially overwhelmed trying to provide for their families.

Nobody should live in fear of seeking medical assistance during unprecedented times like these. Accessing medical facilities and trusting public institutions should be a top priority and fundamental right for Massachusetts residents, not a privilege.

The Safe Communities Act (H.3573/S.1401) has provided hope for many individuals across the state. It is a bill that aims to restore confidence in local public institutions, by allowing police and court officials to focus on public safety, instead of getting tangled up in immigration enforcement.

Without the Safe Communities Act, many individuals will continue to live in fear and suffer the consequences of structural and systematic inequalities.

The Safe Communities Act is more important now than ever before by keeping communities safe and lowering the rates of COVID-19 cases, by providing residents with essential resources to meet their needs and by assisting them in a trustworthy and respectful manner. We need to protect residents across the commonwealth, regardless of who they are, where they come from, or their immigration status.

Immigrants are essential to the Massachusetts economy. Almost one in every six residents is an immigrant, and one in seven is a native-born U.S. citizen with at least one immigrant parent (American Immigration Council, 2017). These individuals are community members, essential workers, business owners, and taxpayers. Today, immigrants of all backgrounds and legal statuses are afraid to call 911, seek medical care, and report crimes they have seen or experienced due to the fear of themselves or a loved one being reported to ICE. Immigrant families are forced to live in dangerous situations and forego applying for food stamps, housing and healthcare. When people are unable to seek aid or report crimes, the safety of everyone is at risk.

It is important to stress the significance of the Safe Communities Act to state representatives by calling and emailing them, in order to have it voted favorably out of committee on May 1st. Furthermore, Massachusetts residents can also contact organizations like Cosecha and the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Coalition (MIRA) to learn more about how to get involved. We need to prioritize the safety of all Massachusetts residents by continuing to promote the values of social justice, equity, and inclusion.

Irma is currently a junior at Brandeis University majoring in Public Policy. She is a passionate advocate of social justice and immigration matters like the Safe Communities Act.

■ House Ways & Means Script

Hello Representative Denise Garlick,

As residents of Massachusetts and students at Brandeis University, we are honored to stand here in front of you, the House Ways and Means Committee, and the legislative staff present.

Throughout your professional and political career, you have advocated for important issues we also value, such as justice for all, protecting healthcare for all residents, championing women's rights, and standing with our LGBTQ community. These values are particularly relevant to the bill we are currently advocating for: the Safe Communities Act (the SCA). As of now, many individuals across the Commonwealth live in fear of reporting crime or seeking help from healthcare professionals such as healthcare providers and law enforcement officers. This has the potential to increase crime rates and negatively impact health outcomes for many individuals across the Commonwealth. Ultimately, the SCA is an effort to increase public safety for all residents as well as ensure access to health and human services.

As a registered nurse, you are aware of the realities and complexities within the healthcare system. Supporters of this bill within the medical field report that they have witnessed that immigrants are not always transparent when completing the required healthcare entrance forms. Instead of providing their physical address, they report false information because they fear being reported and subsequently detained by ICE officials. This harms immigrant communities because they fail to receive the proper healthcare and treatment they deserve. Moreover, the fear imposed by this reality is inhumane because it forces individuals to hesitate when it comes to reporting serious crimes like sexual assault and battery. In their mind, it is better to suffer the consequences of those health and safety concerns instead of actually reporting their concerns and difficult conditions.

Many supporters of the bill strongly believe this bill will bring many positive benefits like boosting our economy and creating safer communities. Though a specific budget has not been determined for this bill, it is important to address a financial concern many opposers worry about: what will this cost and how will it impact our economy? The SCA would have little to no cost. In conversations with individuals like Victor Manny Cruz, a legislative aide for Paul Tucker, the SCA would require police departments to spend in minimal ways, such as printing documents for professional development training sessions on immigration matters.

Moreover, 287(g) agreements allow for local police to be deputized by ICE to do their work for them. This takes up police time and resources and wastes valuable taxpayer dollars in doing so. With the implementation of SCA 287(g) contracts will be prohibited, therefore ensuring that police officers are

dedicating their time and efforts to our protection. With the passing of this bill, taxpayer dollars will be distributed more appropriately and will bring more positive outcomes in the Commonwealth community at large. Police officers will be able to focus on their true mission: to serve and protect. This means that more money will be saved, and local officers will stop being asked to do ICE's job.

Passing this bill will greatly benefit Massachusetts residents in many ways. Most notably, it will make our state safe by restoring trust in public institutions. Jonathan Paz, the Waltham City Council Member for Ward 9 claimed that, "all people want safer communities... [The Safe Communities Act] will, in a very practical way, make our state safer because people will not be afraid of cooperating with law enforcement. We want that kind of cooperation. At the end of the day this is a win-win, particularly because we will ensure safety and adequate use of our resources" (Conversation with Jonathan Paz, February 2020).

We request that you continue to show your support for this bill, Representative Garlick. Thank you for your impactful efforts and advocacy work thus far. We look forward to your continued allyship and support to get this bill voted favorably out of committee on May 1st. This can range from reaching out to your colleagues to speaking with your constituents in your monthly town hall meetings, raising awareness about the importance and benefits of the SCA. It is important to prioritize the safety of all Massachusetts residents by continuing to promote the values of social justice, equity, and inclusion.

Thank you for your time.

■ Letter to the Legislator

Dear Senator Barrett,

As children of immigrants, we are writing in support of the Safe Communities Act (S. 1401)(SCA). Due to your role as an advocate for combating domestic violence and member of the Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security, we know that health and safety within the Commonwealth are a top priority for you. We applaud and deeply appreciate the efforts taken thus far to bring this historic bill to the Senate floor.

Almost one in every six Massachusetts residents is an immigrant, and one in seven is a native-born U.S. citizen with at least one immigrant parent (American Immigration Council, 2017). These individuals are community members, workers, business owners, taxpayers, and neighbors who make up nearly 16% of our population (American Immigration Council, 2017). Today, immigrants of all backgrounds and legal statuses are afraid to call 911, seek medical care, or report crimes they have seen or experienced due to a fear that they themselves or a loved one will be

reported to ICE. Immigrant families are forced to live in dangerous situations and forego applying for food stamps, housing, and healthcare. When people are unable to seek aid or report crimes, the safety of our entire population is at risk. This directly relates to undocumented victims of domestic abuse, who make up approximately 50% of the reported survivors served each year (Maria Pizzimenti, REACH 2020). Immigrant survivors of domestic violence are afraid to report the abuse to their local police or go to court to seek protective orders because they are afraid they might be asked their status, which might lead to their deportation or the deportation of family members.

Passing the SCA will clearly communicate to immigrants that local police will treat them like any other survivors of domestic violence, and that they will be protected here in the Commonwealth. The bill will also re-establish trust between the immigrant community and law enforcement officials by protecting due process, limiting police notifications to ICE, prohibiting 287(g) alliances with ICE, prohibiting police from asking questions about immigration status, and creating a system of training to ensure the bill's successful implementation.

Opposition to this bill is fueled by misinformation. For example, some individuals think the SCA would prevent police from working with federal authorities on criminal matters. However, that is not true. According to the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA), the SCA “does not limit the ability of state and local law enforcement to work with their federal counterparts on criminal or other regulatory matters. It just limits their involvement in civil immigration enforcement” (Documents from MIRA). Ultimately, this helps restore trust in public institutions because it encourages Massachusetts residents, especially for victims and witnesses, to cooperate in police investigations regarding criminal matters. By not passing the bill, our communities are less safe, as immigrants who are victims of or witnesses to violent crimes will be too afraid to report those to the police.

According to Maria Pizzimenti, Director of Advocacy for REACH Beyond Domestic Violence, “this legislation would allay much of the fear that persists in the communities we serve. We have seen multiple cases of survivors who have been too afraid to seek help through the police or the courts... [because they] simply can't trust that local law enforcement will not call in ICE,” (Conversation with Maria Pizzimenti, February 2020). Contrary to misinformation, the SCA makes our communities safer, and our public safety budget more stable. It is imperative that Congress works to fix the broken relationship between our community and local law enforcement during this bill cycle.

As your constituents, we thank you for your continued work in co-sponsoring this bill and strongly urge that you encourage your colleagues to vote the Safe Communities Act (S. 1401) favorably out of committee on May 1st.

With gratitude,

Emily Arkin and Irma Zamarripa

■ Excerpts from Campaign Journal

Emily

On meeting with Representative Hay

He shared that the struggle to support the bill actually had very little to do with the bill itself, but rather with getting the police departments and the mayor of Fitchburg to support it. His constituents, he shared, are actually in majority support of the bill, even though the immigrants in his district report feeling safe overall in their area. I asked him why he was struggling to choose whether to represent his constituents or his mayor and police chief, when the residents of Fitchburg chose to elect him. After this, we dove into a long conversation on the balancing act of the elected official, and the reason he was worried about supporting the bill. At the end of our conversation, he asked that we send our research materials to his staffers, and that we please return on our next visit.

An important lesson I obtained was the power of speaking to representatives who are on the fence about a bill. He was very open to having a long discussion about the pros and cons of the legislation, and afterwards happily pointed us to the offices of like-minded colleagues who would be willing to hear our side of the story. Most importantly, I learned how to strike a balance between advocating and arguing. I pushed a little and then stepped back to ensure I built trust with the representative. I also really tried to hear his concerns and used those feelings to help build my responses instead of rapidly replying with a list of facts and trap questions.

On meeting with Manny Cruz, staffer for Senator Tucker

Manny's work with the bill had been centered around rewriting language to minimize the anti-Trump sentiments so that it could be passable by Governor Charlie Baker, while still making a bill an effective piece of legislation that is able to actually serve its purpose. We spoke about the struggles of being Latinos in politics, the stigma around Spanish in the workplace, how to reframe misinformation, and when to let go when someone is a closed-minded member of the opposition.

This meeting was truly just a moment of comfort amidst a stressful and high-pressure day. After speaking to multiple reps and staffers who completely disagreed with us or were unable to listen to our side, it was so important

to reflect with someone who understood and knew how to handle it. He was able to tell us when and how we should have responded differently in earlier meetings. I learned from this that I should have pushed harder to be heard by certain staffers, and I should have insisted that they took notes with our information for follow up calls. I became more aware of my power as a citizen coming to speak on behalf of a bill and learned that I should have asserted that power a little differently with staffers than the ways I had with Representative Hay in our first meeting of the day.

Finally, I learned that it is most often a waste of time to fight those who are already so firmly against protections for immigrant communities. We asked if it was worth it for us to visit the governor's office and he advised that we not waste our time and our energy on a truly lost cause, and instead focus those efforts towards convincing representatives on the fence to support the SCA in order to obtain a majority to override his inevitable veto.

■ Update

As of 11/23/20: Both the House and Senate components of the bill have been in the respective Committees on Ways and Means since July.

For more information

View the bill (MA legislature website):

S.1401: malegislature.gov/Bills/191/S1401

H.3573: malegislature.gov/Bills/191/H3573

Organization or Coalition support:

Massachusetts Advocates for Children:
massadvocates.org

Ensuring Accurate and Comprehensive Sex Education

An Act relative to healthy youth would require Massachusetts public schools that teach sex education to use a comprehensive, medically accurate, research-informed, and age-appropriate curriculum.

Rolonda Donelson '20
Yael Eiger '20



Rolonda Donelson and Yael Eiger

The current sexual health education standard for school in Massachusetts is based on the guidelines set in the 1999 Massachusetts Comprehensive Health Curriculum Framework.

The 1999 framework is not a curriculum; instead it is a list of standards that shows benchmarks of what students should know after completing a specific grade. This allows schools to provide sexual health education that is not age appropriate or that is rooted in an abstinence-only ideology even though research has shown that abstinence-only sex education is ineffective at delaying sexual activity and avoiding teen pregnancies. Students are being taught information that is outdated, heteronormative, and not required to be medically accurate. The Healthy Youth Act (S.2475/ H.410: An Act relative to healthy youth) is a solution to these problems. The Healthy Youth Act will ensure that if a school chooses to teach a sexual health curriculum it must be comprehensive, age-appropriate and medically accurate.

■ The Bill

S.263/H.410 An Act relative to healthy youth

■ Elevator Speech

Rolonda: Hello, my name is Rolonda Donelson (and my name is Yael Eiger) and we are social justice and social policy students and have research and counseling experience in sexual health education.

Yael: As we can all agree, equitable and meaningful education for children in the Commonwealth is the top priority for our community.

Rolonda: We are deeply concerned about the current state of sexual health curriculum in the state as the current framework is based on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Health Curriculum Framework passed in 1999 and has not been updated since then.

Yael: This framework is not a comprehensive curriculum and includes outdated and harmful language that might alienate groups of students.

Rolonda: Currently our youth are being taught information in sexual health education classes that are not comprehensive and include lessons that are not required to be medically accurate or age appropriate.

Yael: H410, also known as the Healthy Youth Act, will ensure that schools which elect to teach a sexual health curriculum in Massachusetts must teach one that is age appropriate, medically accurate, inclusive and, importantly, educates youth on consent and healthy relationships. Right now, Massachusetts youth

are made vulnerable to nonconsensual sexual encounters, sexually transmitted infection, and unplanned pregnancy.

Rolonda: Representative, I am urging you to contact your colleagues on the Health Care Financing Committee to give the bill a favorable report so that the youth of Massachusetts can receive the tools they need to live healthy, happy lives.

■ Excerpts from Storybook

“We spend more time trying to prevent young people from learning about sex than we do considering the quality of that learning itself. From my own work, I can attest to the fact that young people have been asking for this- it’s time we listen to them.” – a Boston-area youth counselor on why we need the Healthy Youth Act

“Our teacher lumped gender and sexuality together in one 45-minute lesson. And agreed when one of the other kids in the room said it was stupid.” – a Massachusetts high school Gender and Sexuality Alliance (GSA) member on their experience with sex ed in school

“Sex education needs to start in grade school. We need to teach the proper vocabulary for parts of their bodies, we need to teach them it’s okay to say no to adults they don’t trust, and to teach teachers how to deal with children who might be facing sexual trauma. Leaving young children in ignorance can leave them vulnerable.” – Women and Gender Studies professor at Brandeis University on why sex ed is important

“We are the ones providing direct services to survivors. Now it’s time to focus on prevention.” – Katie Santiago Taylor, Head of the Boston Area Rape Crisis Center

■ Op-Ed

Rolonda

The Birds and the Bees: Placing Parents on the Frontlines of Education?

As the new coronavirus rapidly spreads across the globe and the number of confirmed cases in the United States has climbed to well over 100,000, our daily life has become upended. In most states non-essential businesses have shuttered, entire cities have been asked to shelter in place and millions of individuals have been forced to apply for unemployment as companies are forced to lay off workers. But an often overlooked group has also been severely impacted by this virus: students.

In keeping with the practice of social distancing and to limit the gathering of large numbers of people, schools around the country have closed and new virtual learning initiatives have been created. Classroom teachers are live-streaming or recording lessons for later viewing of the material leaving little room for teachers to interact with students directly. This leaves parents to fill in the gaps to answer questions when their student teacher is unavailable. This had led to a growing trend on social media of parents showing ways that they are coping with being thrust into the role of a teacher. Moms teaching fractions using wine in glasses, fathers struggling with elementary school math.

If this crisis has shown us one thing, it’s that teaching should be left to those who have training in that subject. But why do we not feel this way about sexual health education? Why do we automatically assume that parents can provide this instruction better than schools can?

Many opponents of sexual health education in schools say that parents should be the ones teaching their children this subject because it’s an issue that they have experienced themselves. However, as the pandemic has shown, just because a parent has experienced something like taking an elementary school math class does not mean they are equipped to provide instruction on this topic. That is the reason children go to schools in order to learn from educators. But, sometimes even our educators don’t have the right tools. Right now Massachusetts sexual health teachers are using materials to teach that have not been updated since 1999. So if even the teachers don’t have up-to-date information why do we expect the parent to have it?

The Healthy Youth Act aims to fix this issue. The Healthy Youth Act’s main purpose is to improve the sexual health curriculum for the youth of Massachusetts who are enrolled in a school that provides it. The act states that schools that choose to provide a sexual health education must have a curriculum that is age-appropriate, medically accurate and comprehensive. This includes education on topics such as consent and healthy relationships, and instruction that is LGBTQ+ inclusive.

The bill also has a provision in which parents are notified 30 days before the curriculum is set to begin and can opt their student out of participating after viewing the materials.

Currently the bill is in the Committee on Health Care Financing. I urge you to call your legislature so that students can begin to receive this education in the coming academic year.

Rolonda Donelson is a current senior at Brandeis University majoring in Politics and International & Global Studies (IGS) with minors in East Asian Studies and Social Justice Social Policy. At Brandeis Rolonda serves as an Undergraduate Departmental Representative for the IGS Department, and Co-Coordinator of the Student Service Bureau.

Yael

Time for Our Youth to Know

Did you know that sexual education in our Massachusetts schools is not required to be medically accurate? Did you know that our Massachusetts sexual education is also not required to be age appropriate? And did you know that our children, as they form relationships and grow into adulthood, do not learn about what unhealthy or abusive relationships look and feel like?

For the past ten years, Representative Jim O'Day has introduced a bill into our legislature to change this. It is called the Healthy Youth Act (H.410/S.263). The opponents of the bill claim that the bill is a mandate, that it will cost the commonwealth money, and that it infringes on parents' autonomy. Let's explore these claims.

Firstly, the bill is not a mandate. The bill simply states that if a school does offer sexual education, it must be medically accurate, age appropriate, inclusive, and discuss consent. It does not require schools to offer sex education, let alone the identical sex education curriculum. It simply creates common-sense boxes for the curriculum to check, if there is any curriculum at all.

The bill will not cost anything for the municipalities which already teach comprehensive sex education anything. And if a municipality does have to convert their curricula, many curricula which check these necessary boxes are free and available to schools and even to the public.

This could even save Massachusetts some money. In fact, the money that the commonwealth spends each year treating unplanned pregnancy (over 130 million dollars), sexually transmitted infections, and abuse could drop drastically (by about 50%, according to the *Journal of Adolescent Youth*) if education on these topics is encouraged and made widely available. If our citizens learn how to prevent the spread and contraction of sexually transmitted infections, it makes sense that fewer people will spread and contract sexually transmitted infections.

Finally, this bill does not remove parental autonomy. In fact, it ensures it. This bill requires that the curriculum be made available to parents – in multiple languages – for their review before the education begins. The commonwealth does not currently have any rule ensuring that parents can review the sexual education curriculum before it starts.

The commonwealth prides itself on having great schools, and people move from all over the world to raise their children in our public schools. Good education is created by teaching true and accurate information, and teaching what is applicable, useful, and meaningful to its students. These students, after all, become the next wave of our society's lawmakers, nurses, writers, teachers, shop owners, and everything in between. These students are the next generation.

Imagine if your child went to biology class and learned that they could cut off their hand and another would grow back, or they went to history class and learned that women did not have the right to vote. This, thankfully, does not happen, because we already have guidelines for the rest of our education. It is imperative that our schools teach information that is true and accurate. Furthermore, your child can currently go to school and learn about sex in a way that is not appropriate for their age, and the information may also be inaccurate. This bill changes that. Lastly, all of our children deserve to learn about what abusive behavior looks like, so they can recognize it in their own lives. It is clear that creating curricula with reasonable and ethical checkpoints is simply the right thing to do for the commonwealth's children.

If you believe that our commonwealth's students deserve medically accurate, age-appropriate, and inclusive education about their bodies and their relationships, I urge you to contact your Representative and ask them to support the Healthy Youth Act.

Yael Eiger is a resident of Waltham.

■ House Ways & Means Script

The Healthy Youth Act, as you know, will ensure that sex education in Massachusetts is medically accurate, age-appropriate, and inclusive to all of our students. The Healthy Youth Act will also update our sex education guidelines for the first time in over two decades.

We can all agree that creating an understanding, knowledgeable, and prepared society is best for our Commonwealth. It is crucial that we pass this law, which will give Massachusetts youth the best education possible for their lives ahead.

You may be wondering how much this bill will cost our commonwealth. I urge you to first consider how much unplanned pregnancies, abortions, sexual assault, and sexually transmitted infections cost the commonwealth each year. Through education, and in turn, prevention, this cost will go down significantly, and will save Massachusetts that money. Next, the bill does not require a municipality to pay anything for their new curricula – free curricula which meet the guidelines of the Healthy Youth Act are widely available. If the current sex education curricula is harmful to our students, the municipality can easily acquire a new, free curricula, and can teach according to that. If the current sex education teacher is already teaching common-sense education which is medically accurate, inclusive of all of our students, and age-appropriate, the municipality doesn't have to pay a thing.

This bill is absolutely not a mandate and the beauty is that it need not require any money. Our children need to be prepared when they go out into the world – they need to know about healthy relationships, how to avoid unwanted

pregnancy, and they should respect themselves and their bodies. This bill ensures our children will achieve all that and can take these lessons out into the rest of our commonwealth.

Representative, I ask you, without education and understanding of their causes, how will we prevent unwanted pregnancy, sexual assault, and sexually transmitted infection? Accurate and common sense education is the answer.

Therefore, we ask for your support in pushing the Healthy Youth Act through the Ways and Means Committee favorably.

Thank you for your time.

■ Letter to the Legislator

Dear Representative Lawn,

My name is Rolonda Donelson and I am writing to you, along with Yael Eiger. We are residents of Waltham, and Social Justice and Social Policy students at Brandeis University. Yael has previously served as a peer educator for sexual health issues and during my semester studying abroad in Shanghai, I conducted anthropological research on sexual health education in Chinese society.

We would like to thank you for co-sponsoring H. 410/ S. 2475 An Act relative to healthy youth. Your support for this legislation has brought the youth of Massachusetts one step closer to updated educational standards in all curricula.

As a father of five, your children's education is undoubtedly one of your top priorities and you want to ensure they are learning information that can be used to help them succeed in the future. You, like most parents in the commonwealth, entrust the school to teach your children the most current curricula in all subjects. However, Massachusetts is currently failing its students in the area of sexual health curriculum.

The current sexual health education standards in the commonwealth are based on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Health Curriculum Framework adopted by the Board of Education in September of 1999. This framework is not binding and instead serves as a tool for guidance on what schools should be teaching students. This means that there is no current standard for how the sexual health education curriculum in the commonwealth is structured and thus there are wide disparities in instruction of this curriculum from one school to another.

Due to the lack of an overarching state-wide standard for a sexual health curriculum as well as the outdated nature of the current framework, youth are receiving sexual health education that can make students who are members of the LGBTQ+ community feel ostracized, leave youth ignorant of the concept of consent, and allows the existence of a curriculum that is abstinence based.

Some of the opposition to the bill comes from the fact that people have heard that it is a mandate. However that is a common misconception, as the bill would only apply to schools that already choose to teach a sexual health curriculum. The bill also allows parents to view course materials and opt their students out 30 days before the lesson is set to start.

As you may know, house bill H410, the Healthy Youth Act, was reported favorably as changed and referred to the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing. In order to ensure that the bill passes, we are requesting that you write a letter in support of the Healthy Youth Act to the chair of the Joint Committee on Healthcare Finance Cindy F. Friedman and Aaron Michlewitz of the House Committee on Ways and Means.

Thank you,
Rolonda Donelson
Yael Eiger

■ Excerpts from Campaign Journals

Rolonda

On attendance at "Sex Ed for Legislators" event in State House with sponsor and coalition members

During the event I was able to talk to some of the sex ed instructors from the organization "Partners in Sex Education." It was nice to be able to learn what the organization was already doing for sex ed in Massachusetts and ways that we could assist them in getting the bill passed. Overall, I believe the event was successful in that it made the sex ed lessons more accessible by showing the legislators in attendance what they were voting on. At this meeting I received business cards and reached out to members of the coalition. The event also provided material that could be used to promote support for the bill such as an infographic and research that I used at a later meeting with a legislator.

On meeting with Representative McGonagle

What I believe went well was having the material to give to the Representative. I have learned that visual representations of an issue tend to be more persuasive than simply talking to someone. At first, I believed talking to legislators was intimidating but now I can see how approachable some legislators can be. I also gained deeper insight into the legislative process and how getting a bill passed might not be a straightforward process like it is perceived to be.

■ Next Steps

Introduction

The Healthy Youth Act has been filed in the last three legislative sessions. In these past sessions, the bill has always passed on the Senate side but has yet to make it through the House. This current session is the farthest the bill has ever reached on the House side. This session the bill has been reported favorably out of the Committee for Education; however, it was then sent to the Joint Committee of Healthcare Financing where, due to the current public health crisis, it has been given an extension order until June 19th, 2020. The Healthy Youth Act is currently supported by a coalition of organizations that are advocating for its passage. However, due to COVID-19, many bills are hanging in limbo. Nonetheless, we are hopeful that recent support of the act by the legislature, and the coalition of supporters, means that the Healthy Youth Act will pass this session.

Next Steps

If we were to continue to work on this bill, our next steps would be to build momentum for the bill. Currently, due to COVID many bills are understandably being put on the back burner to deal with the public health crisis. However, even though the legislature is too busy to focus on the bill, this time could be spent informing the public on why this bill is necessary. This could be done through the publication of op-eds, social media, and other means. Currently, one of the bill's leading opponents, the Massachusetts Family Institute, is continuing with their advocacy work on the graphic nature of sexual health education and why it should not be taught in schools. It is imperative to the bill's success to counter these narratives through the means that I mentioned above so that members of the public do not get a misrepresentation of the bill. We could also work with members of the coalition to have larger scale virtual version of the event "Sex Ed for Legislators." This way, people are exposed to what the bill seeks to accomplish, which will counter the Massachusetts Family Institute's view of sex education as too graphic for children. When the public health crisis is over, we can then continue to advocate to the members of the Health Care Financing Committee to give the bill a favorable report and eventually bring it to a vote.

What if the Healthy Youth Act Fails?

If the Healthy Youth Act is again not reported out of committee favorably, Representative Jim O'Day would probably file this bill again in the next legislative session. As a former social worker, he is aware of the consequences of youth not receiving comprehensive sexual health education. Also, since Massachusetts sexual health education has not been updated since 1999, the need to eventually pass some

version of this bill is critical. So, the momentum for this bill will not drop if the bill does not pass in this session. But if the bill fails, more work will need to be done in order to flip the opposition. Many people are opposed to the bill because of common misconceptions such as believing that it is a mandate. We are confident that some version of the Healthy Youth Act will pass in the near future.

Conclusion

Learning about sexual health is an important aspect of a student's educational career. The skills learned in this class will inform students behaviors of aspects related to their physical and sexual health. That is why ensuring that these courses are comprehensive, medically accurate, age appropriate, and inclusive is so important. The Healthy Youth Act has been unsuccessful in other legislative sessions due to the misinformation spread about it. The Act is only for schools that choose to offer sexual health education and also not every student is required to participate since parents can opt students out. With the bill including so many provisions to allow parents to have control on whether or not their child participates in a sexual health education curriculum hopefully this will allow some groups who are undecided to support the bill.

■ Update

As of 11/23/20: H.410 – An Act for Healthy Youth is currently in the House sitting in the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing with a reporting date of December 31st, 2020. On the Senate side, the Bill (S.2475) passed on 1/16/2020 with a vote of 33 yeas to two nays.

For more information

View the bill (MA legislature website):

S.2475: <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/191/S2475>

H. 410: <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/191/H410>

Organization or Coalition support:

Planned Parenthood: plannedparenthoodaction.org/

Partners in Sex Education: partnersinsexeducation.org

Boston Area Rape Crisis Center: barcc.org/legislativeadvocacy/hya

Higher Education Opportunities for Students with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities

Holding higher education institutions and government departments and agencies more accountable to promote inclusion and enrollment in college for people with intellectual or developmental disabilities.

Gabi Burkholz '21

Zoe Lehner-Neal '20



Gabi Burkholz and Zoe Lehner-Neal

Massachusetts is a commonwealth that thrives on its intellectual economy as a way to fund a rich and vibrant area of the country. One of the primary ways that Massachusetts sets itself apart from the rest of the country is by placing a high value on its education system, particularly public higher education institutions. However, a vulnerable population of students over the age of 21 who have exited special education are currently not able to access these high institutions. Massachusetts bill H.4419/S.2539 aims to tackle this issue by lowering the requirements necessary for students who have exited special education to apply for these higher education institutions, determining the ways in which students can take courses at the institutions, and creating support systems so that students with disabilities are able to succeed at these institutions and beyond.

■ The Bill

S.756/H.1219: An Act creating higher education opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities, autism and other developmental disabilities

■ Elevator Speech

Hello,

My name is Gabi Burkholz and this is my partner Zoe Lehner-Neal, and we are both students at Brandeis University, an institution dedicated to social justice and equity for all in higher education. We are both Waltham residents who have been working to advocate for House Bill 4419/S.2539: An Act creating higher education opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities, autism, and other developmental disabilities. Like many in the commonwealth, we believe that education is something that should be accessible to everyone who lives in Massachusetts.

However, one of our most vulnerable populations in the commonwealth is being left out of our higher education system. Students with severe intellectual and developmental disabilities are not able to access the proper support services and accommodations at many universities and colleges in Massachusetts. In fact, there are only 12 colleges in Massachusetts that have Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Initiatives programs. Accessibility in higher education is an issue because many colleges and universities do not have the resources and knowledge to support students with disabilities, which leaves this cohort of students without proper accommodations and support services and an inability to pursue higher education and employment opportunities. Through community engagement and responsible planning, public higher education institutions in Massachusetts have the means to create opportunities for all within our education system.

This bill creates a task force, an economic analysis report, and a grant program to ensure that Massachusetts Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Initiative programs are funded and implemented

throughout public higher education institutions in the commonwealth. We are a state that thrives off of its intellectual economy, and educating our citizens is an integral part of our success as a commonwealth. We don't know what the future of higher education will look like with the coronavirus pandemic, and this is an issue that will not go away once social distancing measures are lifted. We need to make sure that all students in Massachusetts are supported in these unprecedented times and hereafter.

We need your assistance in making sure H.4419/S.2539 is extended into the next legislative session and is made a priority for your committee and voted out favorably at the next possible hearing.

■ Excerpts from Storybook

“A choice of any cut-off age for services is arbitrary. Every student has different needs.” – Leah Webster, Special Educator

“My mother tells me when I come home from school, ‘No, I don't think college is going to be for you.’ But I want to go to school, I want that experience... I want to have options.” – Anonymous Student with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

■ Op-Ed

Zoe

Equal Classroom Futures Beyond COVID

In the past few months, COVID-19 has affected all of our lives. To respond to an invisible terror, it seems all facets of society are rushing to react effectively and efficiently. COVID-19 or not, time trudges on – and so do academic timelines and application deadlines. Although lately it's difficult to think more than a day ahead, students all across America (and the globe) are preparing to apply for their next degree. In response to global health stresses, major academic organizations like the International Baccalaureate have cancelled all exams until at least June.¹ An increasing number of higher education institutions are waving GRE requirements for graduate program admission for Fall 2020.² This is not surprising, given the rising popularity of test-optional college application processes. The post COVID-19 future is a fitting landscape for House Bill 4419 to begin.

H.4419 is a bill that increases the accessibility of higher education for students with learning differences or disabilities. In America's regimented academic scheme, pupils desiring further training after high school must do their best with a “one-size-fits-all” application and testing. Some universities allow for wiggle room, accepting ACT scores in lieu of SATs. However, these measurements of aptitude cannot accurately measure the potential of all students who

take it. H.4419 allows students with individualized education plans (IEPs) to bypass these neurotypically-biased entrance exams to equitably seek growth alongside their peers in higher ed with more equity.

COVID-19 has already shown that many facets of the economy are capable of accommodating people with disabilities. Telecommuting and virtual class participation are two ways Americans are attempting to flatten the COVID-19 curve.³ Given that these accommodations were made so quickly, it only goes to show that nearly identical steps could easily be taken to give people with disabilities increased economic accessibility. Now is the time to support H.4419 as it will help more students bounce back into a stronger workforce in the post-COVID future.

Arguments against H.4419 focus on the reputation of the commonwealth's universities. It is true, we have some of the most prestigious academic institutions in the world in our home state. However, by keeping them exclusive to neurotypical students, we are actively discriminating against students with learning disabilities and reinforcing ableism in academia. Shouldn't we, in the educational treasure trove of the commonwealth, help all students achieve their full potential? Shouldn't we set the precedent for others across the country – why limit who has a full toolkit to fight for the American Dream?

I ask you, in this complicated time, to rest your mind and consider the future. Your children, your friends' children, complete strangers—most of these people will apply for college with a dream of success. Would you deny them tools to help achieve that goal? So please call your representative's office to remind them of the timeliness of H.4419 and ask them to vote favorably on this bill. The future awaits us.

Zoe Lehner-Neal is a senior at Brandeis University. She studies Anthropology and Health Policy.

Gabi

New School Setting, Old School Issues: Educational Equity in Massachusetts

The warm sun beams down on me as my friends and I are sitting outside the library. It's the first week of March, and the fact that it's nice enough to sit outside at all is a blessing. I take a swig from my sticker-adorned water bottle, pull out my laptop, and get to work. I have an assignment for my intro to epidemiology class due tomorrow that I need to start. I

1. <https://www.telegraphindia.com/states/west-bengal/ib-class-xii-exams-cancelled/cid/1758482>

2. <https://www.msstate.edu/newsroom/article/2020/03/msu-waiving-gmatgre-requirements-summer-and-fall-graduate-school>

3.] <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/03/23/what-coronavirus-means-for-the-future-of-work-from-home.html>

go to check my school email and I notice a new email in my inbox. My university's president has decided that all classes are going to move online and that I'm expected to move out of my dorm as soon as possible. So much for that epidemiology assignment!

Not too long ago, this was my reality. As soon as I knew what was happening, I was packing up my belongings, figuring out how to store certain items since I live across the country from where I was attending school. I was also trying to figure out what this complete upheaval of my college life meant for my academic schedule. I consider myself lucky because I have the accessible resources to continue my education in the midst of this crisis in higher education. However, students with severe intellectual and developmental disabilities have a different experience, as many of them do not have the proper accommodations, support services, and peer resources required to acclimate to this new normal. This is an issue that House Bill 4419/Senate Bill 2539 attempts to rectify.

Some schools already have these inclusive systems in place. There are 12 universities in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts that have an Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Initiative, where individuals with severe intellectual and developmental disabilities can take or audit courses and have full access to accommodations, support services, and peer mentors and friends in the hope that it will allow them to further their future careers. Governor Baker also supports these programs as he has fully funded a line item for them in his budget for next year. However, with the impending Covid-19 crisis, these opportunities are at risk.

H. 4419/S.2539 aims to bridge these gaps and create higher education opportunities for these individuals. Through grant programs, financial analysis reports, and a task force including the chairman of the Committee on Higher Education as well as the deans of state schools like Salem State and UMASS Amherst, a platform would be formed to help guide grantee schools' successful implementation of new programs.

Other states have been implementing programs like the ones in Massachusetts. California has the Open Doors to College program, an inclusive enrollment program, which is being implemented at eight community colleges around the state. This program is similar to the programs we have in Massachusetts. Syracuse University also has the InclusiveU program, which is run by the Taishoff Center for Higher Education that is like the Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Initiatives (ICEI) programs but has a stronger focus on social opportunities between students with disabilities and their neurotypical peers.

These programs are successful for students like Ryan, a 25-year-old Massachusetts resident who participated in an ICEI program at Salem State, moved directly into

independent living after college and has now secured a job at Endicott College. Ryan says that the program was the main contributing factor to his current success. These programs should be the standard for educational equity across the commonwealth. H.4419/S.2539 gets us one step closer to this reality.

H.4419/S.2539 is at risk for being swept under the rug in the legislature due to the Covid-19 pandemic. While it is important that the commonwealth focuses on fighting Covid-19 there are vulnerable populations, like those with disabilities, who will suffer greatly if we do not provide them with the resources they need to succeed. The pandemic may be new, but the issues of social isolation, inclusivity, and accessibility for individuals with severe intellectual and developmental disabilities are not. We are at risk of rendering an already vulnerable population become even more vulnerable.

I urge you to call House Committee Chairman Aaron Michlewitz, Senate Committee Chairman Michael Rodrigues, and your local representatives. Ask them not to forget about H.4419/S.2539 and to make the bill a priority as soon as possible. When you're done with that go wash your hands.

Gabi Burkholz is a junior at Brandeis University majoring in Politics and Health: Science, Society and Policy with a minor in Legal Studies. Gabi is the Treasurer of the Undergraduate Theatre Collective, the Director of the Brandeis National Committee Student Ambassador Program, the Vice President of Membership Development for Delta Phi Epsilon Beta Psi Chapter, an Admissions Ambassador, an Orientation Leader, and the Junior Representative to the Alumni Board of the Student Union.

■ House Ways & Means Script

To: Chairman Aaron Michlewitz

From: Gabi Burkholz and Zoe Lehrner-Neal

CC: Vice Chair Denise Garlick, Assistant Vice Chair Elizabeth A. Malia, and the House Ways and Means Committee

Subject: In Support of Bill H.4419 (An Act creating higher education opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities, autism, and other developmental disabilities)

Mr. Chairman Michlewitz, My name is Gabi Burkholz and this is my partner Zoe Lehrner Neal, and we are both students at Brandeis University, an institution dedicated to social justice and equity for all in higher education. We are both Waltham residents, and Zoe is a Massachusetts voter. Over the past month, we have been working to advocate for House Bill 4419: An Act creating higher education opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities, autism, and other developmental disabilities.

We are among many constituents in Massachusetts who believe that education is something that should be accessible

to everyone who lives in the commonwealth. Through community engagement and responsible planning, public higher education institutions in Massachusetts have the means to create opportunities for all within our education system. We are a state that thrives off of its intellectual economy, and educating our citizens is an integral part of our success as a commonwealth. We need your assistance in making sure this bill extends into the next legislative session, is a priority for your committee, and is voted out favorably at the next possible hearing.

One of the most underserved populations in the commonwealth is being left out of our higher education system. Students with severe intellectual and developmental disabilities and autism are not able to access the proper support services and accommodations at many of their universities and colleges in Massachusetts. According to Harold Kleinert's article "Students With Intellectual Disabilities Going to College? Absolutely!", students with intellectual and developmental disabilities have the lowest post-secondary education attendance rate from any disability category. This exclusion is both economically and socially detrimental to the commonwealth as it limits employment opportunities as well as their participation in the workforce and overall economy. While programs like the Massachusetts Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Initiative (hereafter MAICEI) have been successfully implemented in schools, they are only helpful for high school students and only really work at schools like University of Massachusetts-Amherst which are well funded. In fact, there are only 12 colleges in Massachusetts that have Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Initiatives programs. This leaves many smaller universities and colleges in the dust, which is concerning for a state like Massachusetts where education is so highly valued.

We believe that bill H.4419 is an effective way to get students with severe intellectual and developmental disabilities and autism in the classroom with their peers. We allow thousands of people in Massachusetts to attend college at any age, so we should be allowing students with disabilities to enter our collegiate system as well. Although some people think that having students with severe disabilities in college classrooms changes the status of their institution, having this group of students in mainstream higher education classrooms will allow students without disabilities to interact with students with disabilities. For students with disabilities, it is an opportunity to continue their education and gain access to future employment opportunities.

We recognize that there are concerns with this bill. The new draft of this bill addresses many of the financial concerns surrounding this bill by creating a grant to fund programs like MAICEI at public higher education institutions across the commonwealth, which would be created by a task force that includes the secretaries of education and health and

human services as well as representatives from multiple Massachusetts educational partners.

The task force would also create an analysis report detailing how the state government could finance these programs, as they have been doing since 2007. Governor Baker has even secured his autism line item for the next fiscal year, and has fully funded the Transition to 22 program that supports individuals with disabilities as they transition out of special education. Many other schools across the nation are also implementing programs like this one. For example, in New York, Syracuse University has an entire inclusive university dedicated to students with disabilities continuing their education with an added section for peer mentorship, while the SUNY system has entire offices at every university for accommodation and support services. The closest Massachusetts has to something like this is the MAICEI program at UMass Amherst and Salem State University, which isn't available at every school because of funding. This bill would create equal opportunities for all students across the board.

There is also the issue of many parents of children with disabilities not wanting their children to continue their education at the university level. As one student with an IEP puts it, "My mother tells me when I come home from school, 'no, I don't think college is going to be for you.' But I want to go to school, I want that experience... I want to have options." Although this is the case with some families, the majority of parents feel as though their children should have access to public higher education. Johanne Pino, an advocate for the bill who works as Massachusetts Advocates for Children, says that she is glad her children, who both have disabilities, were able to access higher education at local colleges because it allowed them to create successful futures for themselves.

Mr. Chairman, I urge you to make House Bill 4419/ Senate Bill 2539 a priority and vote it out of committee favorably. By supporting this bill, you have the chance to create equal opportunities for students with severe intellectual and developmental disabilities and autism looking to continue their studies in higher education, and in turn contributing to the intellectual and economic success of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Thank you.

■ Letter to the Legislator

Dear Representative Whalen,

My name is Zoe Lehner-Neal and I am writing to you as a constituent of the 1st Barnstable District. I write to you on behalf of my partner, Gabi Burkholz, as well. As students at Brandeis University, we firmly believe in advocacy for issues of social justice and equity. We support current House bill H.4419 and we implore you to do the same.

Massachusetts prides itself on its intellectual resources. The commonwealth thrives on its plethora of prestigious academic institutions and sets an example the rest of the country looks up to. However, many young students in the commonwealth with LDs (learning disabilities/differences) feel barred from accessing this invaluable resource. Bill H.4419 aims to remove these barriers and make higher education more accessible to all students beyond neurotypicality.

Some public universities in Massachusetts offer Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Initiative (ICEI) programs for students with learning disabilities, providing support systems similar to those offered in K-12 to students in higher education. Participating students can access facets of college life beyond the classroom – volunteer clubs, social gatherings, and anything else offered to a neurotypical student. These programs have seen great success – many students have exited these college programs to join the workforce with heightened skills for vocational and social success. However, special education services are not a standard offering at every university. This is an issue of accessibility and must be amended.

H.4419 offers a solution to this problem in three parts. First, it would create a report analyzing the success of ICEI programs at schools like Salem State University. The report would detail the budget needed to establish special education teams on an individual-school-basis. Second, H.4419 would create a grant program to help universities, public and private, develop new programs for special education. Finally, a task force including the chairman of the Committee on Higher Education as well as the deans of state schools like Salem State and UMASS Amherst would be formed to help guide grantee school's successful implementation of new programs.

Governor Baker has already allocated full funding for line items on the Turning 22 Initiative and ICEI programs in the 2021 fiscal year budget. By passing H.4419, funding for these programs would be cemented in the future.

Currently, H.4419 is in the House Ways and Means Committee. As a lifelong Dennis resident, it is important to me that you vote this bill favorably out of committee. I support the successful futures of all students and I very much hope you will do the same.

Thank you very much,

Zoe Lehner-Neal and Gabi Burkholz

■ Excerpts from Campaign Journals

Zoe

On strategizing meeting plans and all meetings

I got a tip from my hometown neighbor, retired Representative Cleon Turner, that Tucker was close with Tim Whelan, my neighbor's replacement. Although Whelan was a

Republican, he was also a member of House Ways and Means and happened to be my local representative. I built up an email rapport with Barbara, Whelan's chief of staff, in hopes of planning a later meeting with him. Getting that meeting with Whelan would be important – as a constituent, my voice would (or should, anyway) matter to him. As I knew Tucker cared about education legislation, creating buzz about H.4419 might get him talking to Whelan. Given their relationship, this would be a good way to reinforce our bill's presence in Ways and Means.

However, in each meeting, Gabi and I were reminded that there were 6,000 bills proposed during each congressional session, and that representatives cannot fully support all the bills they want to pass.

Gabi's and my message was not destined to be a forgotten plea like the others. Our hands-on advocacy practice certainly confirmed one thing: personal presentation is the key to memorability. By following through with email conversations, showing up in person, and being as professionally presentable as possible, Gabi and I made a strong case for H.4419 and ourselves. We were well-spoken and (progressively more) confident, and very cleanly dressed. Throughout the day, I got several compliments on my earrings by people we met with. They were big white snakes, and matched my stark platinum hair. I wore them on purpose – they are very eye-catching and would make our case more memorable by visual accompaniment.

We also left with some questions for future improvement, some beyond our control. Did we look too young, or sound too hopeful, to truly be taken seriously? Is it obvious that our ambitions have not yet been crushed by decades of advocacy practice? Regardless, we had a simple mission for the day: spread the word about H.4419 and keep the disability policy buzz going.

Gabi

On call with Johanne Pino of Massachusetts Advocates for Children

Johanne's responses were incredibly eloquent and descriptive, and gave me a lot of insight into how to advocate and lobby for the issues I care about. She started off by telling me about what Massachusetts Advocates for Children does for the bill and how the organization worked with lobbyists, legislators, and other non-profit organizations to create the bill, and how they provide ways for people to get to the State House to help advocate for the bill.

On the legislative reception put on by Massachusetts

Developmental Disabilities Council/The Arc of Massachusetts at the State House

I learned a lot at this event about how to be an effective advocate for my bill and how personal stories matter, as

I talked about Ryan's story at every legislative meeting I attended the next day and wrote about his story in my Op-Ed. I was also able to see how legislation and coalitions benefit people's personal lives on a daily level, as many of the attendees had disabilities themselves or were family members of people with disabilities and the legislative measures taken by Senator O'Connor and Representative Michlewitz had a profound effect on their lives. I really enjoyed attending this reception as it ultimately made me a better advocate for my bill.

■ Next Steps

The future of this bill is very unclear, which is understandable given the ever-present coronavirus pandemic and its impact on the Massachusetts legislature. Although the House and the Senate are still holding informal sessions, the priority is placed on creating and passing legislation that protects citizens of the commonwealth during this unprecedented era. As a result, H.4419 was not able to receive an extension and will not survive the legislative session.

This means that the bill will have to start the legislative process all over again and lose all of the traction it gained during this past year. H.4419 has gone through three legislative cycles with very few changes to the actual bill, proving that accessibility in education is an issue that continues to persist in Massachusetts. The coronavirus may have pressed the pause button on certain legislative issues, but that does not mean they will go away once social distancing measures are lifted. Even so, the "Present and Defend" presentation showed just how difficult it is for even the least controversial of bills to pass. Legislators like Jay Kaufman could not be swayed to vote for our bill, which was both confusing and upsetting. In terms of next steps, I want to focus on the struggles this bill is facing to pass through the legislature and how any future advocacy could help this bill to be signed into law.

I would have definitely loved to meet with more individuals and organizations to talk about the bill. I think that although there was not a specific coalition attached to our bill like other groups had, there was definitely untapped potential in organizations like Massachusetts Advocates for Children and the Waltham Arc. I interviewed a staff member from the former as part of my storybook and overall campaign, and I would have loved for us to be able to partner with them again, as I feel they have a deep understanding of many of the issues surrounding the bill. I also think that meeting with more members of the House and Senate Ways and Means Committees would have been helpful. Of course, there's only so much a person can do when everything is held over Zoom and I can see the Pacific Ocean from my bedroom, but that's the direction I would go if I were to continue to advocate for the bill.

I think this bill doesn't have a lot of traction because it's so simple. Mark Sternman, Senator Joan Lovely's legislative and policy director, calls it a "motherhood and apple pie" bill. There's nothing controversial about the bill. It's not like the ROE Act or the Healthy Youth Act that at first glance, can drastically shift the way Massachusetts is dealing with certain issues. But what I've come to find is that this bill will shift the commonwealth's view on higher education and who we're allowing to sit in the classroom. I also think that passing this bill would require legislators and advocates to move away from the deficit model of thinking and more towards the idea that individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities can bring a new perspective into the classroom and even outperform their peers. Despite all of my previous work with people with disabilities, I fell into this trap as I was trying to explain the positive aspects of accessibility to legislators.

I also think that there are some areas of the bill that need to be reworked. Although the bill went through a major rewrite in the middle of the semester that answered many of the questions that legislators were asking, there are still many issues that need to be resolved. Legislators still have questions regarding the financial and social aspects of the bill, and this came to light in our "Present and Defend" presentation. Zoe and I were asked about if schools were willing to foot the bill (no pun intended) for inclusive concurrent enrollment programs and how college students would feel about having peers with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the classroom with them. While we were able to answer these questions, these are issues that should be addressed in the bill.

Quite frankly, I think it's the reason why this bill is stuck in the Ways and Means Committee right now (other than the coronavirus and the fact that the committee is inundated with bills). This bill is not written for the common Massachusetts citizen, but rather people involved in higher education and special education who know what the issues surrounding accessibility are. That's concerning given that Massachusetts prides itself on its intellectual economy, especially its colleges and universities. I think that everyone should be able to read a bill and understand the changes the bill would make to the commonwealth, and this bill does not do that right now. Rewriting the bill goes far beyond me, but who's to say that in a year, I could possibly be working for an organization like Massachusetts Advocates for Children? While I think I'm a little too young to be making any substantial change, restructuring the bill and answering some of those key questions would be my next step if I were to keep advocating for this bill.

H.4419 highlights the critical issue surrounding accessibility and access within higher education in Massachusetts. This bill seeks to expand programs that

already exist and are continuously funded not only through the schools themselves, but in Governor Baker's FY 2021 budget. While the reckless optimist in me hopes that the bill will get a last-minute extension, the realist in me does not think it will happen. Through a reworking of H.4419 and the continued support of previous legislative sponsors and outside organizations like ARC and Massachusetts Advocates for Children, I think that this bill will pass in the next legislative session. Although we don't know what the future holds, I hope that I can still be able to fight for the issues that I care about, particularly regarding accessible higher education.

■ Update

As of 11/23/20: The bill was voted favorably out of the Joint Committee on Higher Education midway through the semester and is now H.4419/S.2539: An Act creating higher education opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities, autism, and other developmental disabilities. It is in the House and Senate Ways and Means Committees and is waiting on a vote.

For more information

View the bill (MA legislature website):

S.756: malegislature.gov/Bills/191/S756

H.1219: malegislature.gov/Bills/191/H1219

Organization or Coalition support:

Massachusetts Advocates for Children:
massadvocates.org

Protecting Undocumented and Other Vulnerable Residents

Ensuring that Massachusetts police resources are used to fight crime, not assist in federal immigration enforcement

Matthew Patton '20
Matthew Rottenberg '21

An Act to protect the civil rights and safety of all Massachusetts residents, or the Safe Communities Act (SCA), seeks to define processes involving local/state law enforcement and federal agencies dealing with immigration cases and establishing rights of people when dealing with immigration officers. At the moment the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency (ICE) has established contracts with state and local police that allows them to serve as federal immigration officers and carry out retainers. This repurposing of local police, along with a lack of public clarity on one's rights in relation to immigration enforcement, creates high anxiety for immigrant community members in Massachusetts, many of whom are undocumented. They fear interacting with police, emergency services, and even medical professionals because they do not have legal documentation, and worry they will be separated from their families and deported even without committing a crime. This allows for many crimes and health issues to go unreported, which does not provide safety – it hurts communities. The SCA works to refocus the priorities of state and local law enforcement towards community responsibilities instead of immigration. It also creates guidelines and procedures for the immigration enforcement process in regards to the responsibility of law enforcement to the person and ICE, while instituting mandatory training on immigration proceedings. The SCA would ensure that all people living in the commonwealth can rely on law enforcement to serve their best interests and promote safety in their communities instead of serving federal priorities that detract from their primary goals.

■ The Bill

S.1401: An Act to protect the civil rights and safety of all Massachusetts residents



Matthew Patton and Matthew Rottenberg

■ Elevator Speech

We can all agree that everyone, regardless of citizenship status, deserves fair and equal treatment under the law, including a just explanation of one's rights throughout the legal process.

The Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court has ruled that state and local police departments are not responsible for the enforcement of federal immigration policies; however, there have been numerous contracts filed by ICE allowing local police officers to serve as federal immigration officials, question people about citizenship, and communicate with ICE under unnecessary circumstances, confounding the role they serve in the eyes of immigrants. This fracturing of

the immigrant community's trust heavily limits their use of necessary emergency services and their willingness to report crime in fear of being deported.

Terminating these contracts and providing legal protections for immigrants will ensure that everyone can rely on state and local police to enforce the laws passed to protect their communities, and will bring the focus and resources of the state to the most pressing issues affecting residents.

Will you support the Safe Communities Act in the Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security to refocus the responsibilities of law enforcement, provide necessary legal procedures and ensure the right to safety of all Massachusetts residents?

■ Op-Ed

Matthew Patton

Defining and Creating Public Safety

Today's political shouting match has many fronts where Americans find themselves entrenched against one another, but there are few as polarizing as immigration. While other high priority issues like health care and the economy affect a broad spectrum of people, the everyday effects of immigration widely vary person to person. This forces us to ask: why is the immigration debate so important? The answer is safety.

When people talk about immigration in America, their primary concern is safety. Whether they're afraid of being hurt by crimes committed by noncitizens or they fear seeing themselves or their loved ones deported, citizens and non-citizens alike are worried about their lives being affected by the reactive whiplash of immigration policies. So in order to address these fears, immigration policy has to outline how police can keep communities safe. This can be done by having distinct responsibilities for local and state police to deal with the issues affecting their communities regardless of someone's citizenship. Additionally, procedures would be developed for when and how immigration enforcement agencies like ICE and the Department of Homeland Security can be contacted. In addition to establishing law enforcement's job to keep the public safe, this would allow law enforcement to build a more grounded relationship with the people they are protecting.

Ensuring public safety also implies a common definition of "the public." Despite the values and/or talking points of the right, no legitimate depiction of America (and Massachusetts in particular) can ignore the presence of immigrants, undocumented or otherwise. Almost one in six Massachusetts residents is foreign born, and an estimated 4% of Massachusetts residents are undocumented. Within that there are families with and without undocumented immigrants who fear their livelihoods are at risk of being destroyed by immigration enforcement, causing mass anxiety over whether

or not law enforcement can be trusted. This can be seen in how members of the immigrant community fear using emergency and health services. 44% of Latinos and 70% of undocumented immigrants say they are less likely to report a crime because they fear police officers will ask about their citizenship, and reports from physicians show clear impacts of the fear of deportation on physical and psychological health.

H.3573/S.1401, a.k.a. the Safe Communities Act, works to acknowledge the communities of Massachusetts for what they are and to establish a commitment to protecting them fairly. It is not, as some might argue, a sanctuary policy aiming to protect illegal immigrants as they bring crime into communities. Instead, it addresses concerns about safety, and creates a real process to address them. I encourage you to contact your state legislators to support the Safe Communities Act, and to prioritize a safer Massachusetts for all.

Matthew Patton is a senior at Brandeis University majoring in politics with a minor in economics.

■ Matthew Rothenbeg

Coronavirus' Affect on Immigrant Communities in Massachusetts

Following the coronavirus pandemic, the Hispanic Caucus of Congress asked Congress to release all migrant prisoners from ICE detention centers nationwide. With conviction and urgency, the Caucus emphasized their concerns about ICE to the public in a tweet: "ICE is not equipped to deal with the complex medical needs of vulnerable migrants during the coronavirus crisis." (Gostanian, 2020). In a letter aimed at the acting director of ICE, the Caucus emphasized the history of unconfined virus outbreaks in ICE facilities, the clear lack of hygienic materials and policies to prevent viruses and diseases from spreading, and the blatant neglect of caring for infected inmates until it is too late.

So far, ICE has forced inmates to pay for sanitation supplies like soap and hand sanitizer and has kept them bound together in tight spaces, and has only removed inmates when they have started to show severe symptoms of the coronavirus. An ICE officer speaking to an inmate was caught on tape saying, "some of you will probably die" (Democracy Now, 2020). These truths about ICE's policies, their facilities, and their handling of inmates are remarkable; it's a clear recipe for deadly consequences for many people who have not yet had an opportunity to appear at an immigration court. These unjust conditions that ICE has exacerbated are only one example of how ICE's actions are threatening the safety and security of immigrants during the coronavirus pandemic. ICE and the federal government's inaction to close detention centers will inevitably cause harm and injustice to the incarcerated migrant population. However, choosing not to close detention centers is only one area in which the government's inaction will severely cost the immigrant community.

In our state of Massachusetts, the history of distrust between the immigrant community and the state and local police has only been worsened by the pandemic. As police have increased their community presence to aid in the emergency response and enforcement of quarantine policies, immigrants' anxieties have increased as well. While progressive police departments such as those of Waltham and the City of Cambridge have worked in the past to build a relationship of trust with immigrant communities, focusing solely on law enforcement, other police departments like the Bristol County Police have taken it upon themselves to engage in strict enforcement of immigration law and in the process have alienated immigrants.

Through signing 287(g) contracts with ICE, certain Massachusetts counties have sanctioned officers and personnel to enforce immigration law in addition to criminal law. Departments such as Bristol that perform both roles dissuade immigrants and undocumented people from openly reporting crimes or emergencies, since doing so would put themselves, their loved ones, or other people within their communities at risk of being detained. Therefore, police departments that took up the roles of ICE have hindered the possibility of open communication and trust with immigrant communities. The increased presence of police in these communities has put immigrant communities on edge, in fear that they will be subject to immigration law enforcement. Simultaneously, these policies make immigrants feel like they do not have equal access to protection from the law.

As a consequence, many immigrants have been deterred from seeking medical attention and using emergency services in a time when they need it most. Immigrants and undocumented people's concerns that they could be reprimanded or detained by the police for questioning has deterred them from going to health centers for coronavirus tests, emergency services and general care overall. Marion Davis of the Massachusetts Immigrant & Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA) spoke on behalf of the immigrant communities of Massachusetts stating, "We don't know that everybody's going to feel safe getting medical help, getting tested or getting treated, because we've had three years of very intense fear in our communities.... We've been hearing a long time from providers that people were avoiding clinics and avoiding hospitals." (Neisloss, 2020). The legacy of a policy that honors ICE more than the working residents of Massachusetts now burdens the state community in its entirety. If any individual who appears to have symptoms of the coronavirus chooses to stay inside of their community instead of seeking medical attention, they not only risk their own death and getting their loved ones infected, but also risk infecting others within their community at large. Many of Massachusetts' immigrants are therefore faced with a catch-22: the possibility of death from not seeking out

treatment, or the possibility of death from seeking medical care but being detained and sent to an ICE facility only to risk being exposed to the virus.

Though ICE has stated that they do not condone immigration arrests in medical facilities, they have neglected to comment about making arrests outside the direct premises of these sites. And even if they don't make these types of arrests, the fear that they have created from a long history of alienating immigrant populations still influences decisions not to seek medical attention. This predicament presents a clear and present danger for the state of Massachusetts that we cannot afford, especially during these times. The virus' spread cannot be contained just by social distancing. Testing for and isolating cases of coronavirus is necessary to prevent the spread. However, as the law stands, police will continue to have a relationship of distrust with immigrants and will continue to discourage those who need testing and treatment. However, old solutions can remedy a part of this crisis our state is facing which will make our communities safer in the short and long run.

State Senate Bill 1401, known as the "Safe Communities Act," offers the necessary correction to the problems of mistrust in law enforcement that the state faces. By mandating there to be a separation between law enforcement and immigration enforcement through effectively ending 287(g) contracts, the act would make immigrants in Massachusetts feel safer to report crime and would enable them to utilize medical services by ensuring that law enforcement won't detain them or a loved one. The act would additionally build further trust in law enforcement by mandating certain due process procedures for immigrants when being questioned in relation to immigration status.

Though problems related to immigration might appear on the surface to be a low priority for the state legislature when dealing with the ongoing coronavirus crisis, policies such as the Safe Communities Act would have a significant impact on our state in terms of ensuring the health and safety of all our communities. I think it would be a travesty if the Massachusetts state legislature did not act upon this as soon as possible, as the health and safety of immigrant communities affects us all.

■ House Ways & Means Script

Mr. Chairman Michlewitz, my name is Matthew Rothenberg and I am a resident of Waltham and a student at Brandeis University. I am here today with my colleague, Matthew Patton, also a resident of Waltham and a student at Brandeis University. My partner and I have been working to pass House Bill 3573: An Act to protect the civil rights and safety of all Massachusetts residents, and we wanted to address the reasons we believe the passage of this bill should be given the

utmost respect and attention. The Massachusetts Business Immigration Coalition, headed by Andrew Tarsy, believes this act would create an environment where immigrants are protected by the law and would help the Massachusetts economy thrive and prosper.

We must examine how current standards of law enforcement have held the state's economy back from reaching its potential. For there to be justice and equity in Massachusetts, it is integral that law enforcement protects the wellbeing of all of the state's residents and serves justice fairly. Massachusetts residents all pay taxes to help support local and state law enforcement, thus providing the necessary funds for law enforcement to protect residents and carry out their duties. However, the status quo of immigration enforcement jeopardizes equality in law enforcement and threatens the wellbeing of Massachusetts immigrant communities, which are a significant part of the labor force. To secure equal access to justice and security for all Massachusetts residents, we need your help now to ensure that this bill is a priority for your committee and that it passes favorably.

Immigrants are the backbone of the Massachusetts economy. Nearly one of every six Massachusetts residents is an immigrant, and one of every five Massachusetts workers is an immigrant as well, according to the American Immigration Council. Additionally, the immigrant community collectively pays billions of dollars in taxes and spends tens of billions that support our economy. Despite how vital immigrants are to the commonwealth, current state policies surrounding federal immigration enforcement inhibits the ability of immigrants to have equal protection under the law. The 287(g) agreements ICE and the Department of Homeland Security have made with several local and state police departments in Massachusetts prompt them to act as immigration enforcement. Furthermore, residents of Massachusetts and immigrants lack "due process protections" despite having clearly defined rights when being questioned by immigration enforcement. These policies not only misappropriate Massachusetts tax dollars to fund what is a role of the federal government but also pose a serious safety threat to the immigrant community. These policies have led to distrust and communication barriers between immigrant communities and the police, which potentially poses harm to the Massachusetts economy at large. If we don't act now, we continue to put both our economy and our state's residents in danger.

The Safe Communities Act (SCA) separates the role of the state and federal government in enforcing immigration law from local and state police. Simultaneously, the SCA creates "due process protections" for people being questioned by immigration enforcement, and would ensure the reading

of "Miranda-like" rights. It would create grounds for law and immigration enforcement to aid each other when dealing with violent criminals. The SCA also has guidelines for reporting release information about persons between immigration enforcement and law enforcement. Lastly, the SCA necessitates officers be trained to be able to respect and carry out these policies properly. SCA respects our immigrant neighbors for the great work they do in our economy and would rebuild trust in law enforcement. The act would help build a stronger relationship between the immigrant community and law enforcement by creating room for open communication and transparency. By helping immigrants feel welcomed and protected, SCA would solidify an already strong immigrant economy here in Massachusetts.

I understand you might have some concerns surrounding how the SCA would affect Massachusetts fiscally. But the SCA would not harm funding at the federal level. On the contrary, it would aid the Massachusetts economy. For instance, some may believe that SCA would cause fiscal retaliation from the Trump administration as a punishment for making Massachusetts a sanctuary state. Though the president's administration does have a record of withholding funds to sanctuary cities, the SCA would not actually designate the state as such, since police and immigration enforcement would still work with each other on criminal cases. Therefore, we wouldn't expect sanctions to follow the passage of SCA. As Andrew Tarsy of the Massachusetts Business Immigration Coalition believes, SCA would create the environment where immigrants can work freely and feel protected by the law, which would strengthen the Massachusetts economy.

Mr. Chairman, I urge you to make this bill a priority and vote it out of committee favorably. By supporting this bill, you can elevate the wellbeing of our immigrant neighbors and establish trust in the law.

Thank you.

■ Letter to the Legislator

Dear Senator Barrett,

Our names are Matthew Patton and Matthew Rothenberg, and we are students at Brandeis University in Waltham. As residents of Waltham, a city with a robust immigrant population that includes Brandeis students, we are familiar with how the immigrant community struggles to have the level of trust in police afforded by most citizens. It's vital to the standards of our justice system to ensure that all residents, regardless of citizenship, are given equal protections under the law and feel safe to rely on police and emergency services. Additionally, assuring residents that our police are here to protect them is fundamental to keeping communities as safe as possible.

Even though the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruled that state and local police departments are not subject to carry out the duties of federal immigration enforcement, the contracts filed between ICE and state/local police and their communication over cases without the knowledge of affected parties has squandered immigrants' trust of law enforcement. This is embodied in immigrants' constant anxiety over their or their loved one's potential deportation in noncriminal cases, an unwillingness to call police in emergencies or to report crimes, and the many undocumented immigrants who are afraid to use medical services because they don't want to be identified as "illegal" and deported for seeking the help they need.

Creating policies which establish the roles and procedures of police and ICE is crucial to keeping all residents safe. Senate Bill S.1401, An Act to protect the civil rights and safety of all Massachusetts residents (more commonly known as the Safe Communities Act), clearly outlines the responsibilities of police to provide due process and follow procedure when engaging with immigrants and in their interactions with immigration enforcement, eliminates all contracts with ICE, and provides structural protections to ensure the implementation of the bill.

Other states and cities that have passed similar measures have seen a decrease in crime, as immigrants feel more comfortable relying on police and reporting crime. A California study showed 44% of Latinos felt less comfortable reporting crime if they feared being deported (Annals of AAPSS, 2012). Additionally, it makes state funds used to carry out federal immigration contracts available, largely to institute training on these procedural updates. There are opponents of this bill who disagree with the bill's approach to community safety because they see undocumented immigrants as more likely to commit criminal acts. Yet studies have shown that there is an insignificant or negative relationship between immigration and crime (Annual Review of Criminology, 2018).

Will you help us by committing to creating a safe and just community for all residents by actively supporting the Safe Communities Act in the Joint Committee on Public Safety?

Sincerely,

Matthew Patton and Matthew Rothenberg

■ Excerpts from Campaign Journals

Matthew Patton

On meeting with Afnan Nehela, Communications Director for Sen. Jamie Eldridge

The first meeting Matty, Emily, and Irma and I had was with Afnan Nehela, the communications director for Senator Jamie Eldridge (one of the bill's sponsors). We met with her

to troubleshoot questions we couldn't answer on our own and to get a better understanding of the messaging used to support it. This meeting was vital in giving us background on the ongoing fight for the SCA, as she explained the history of the bill, how and why changes were made between versions, narratives informing opposition arguments, and different strategies to use when advocating to people who aren't already in support of it. One of the biggest takeaways was learning how to reframe arguments one might have against giving additional protection to immigrants. Ms. Nehela explained how ICE can't end illegal immigration as they hope to since so many people come in legally and then stay illegally, which is not a federal crime.

On meeting with a staffer for Sen. Michael Moore

Most of the meetings we had were fairly straightforward, with senators being in support of the bill but conscious of the trouble it would likely face in the house. I think the most useful of these meetings came when we met with a member of Senator Michael Moore's staff, who was not willing to confirm that Senator Moore would support the bill because of calls from sheriffs opposing it and concerns about its popularity in the house. While we pushed back and tried to get him to prioritize the arguments and benefits of the bill, we had a productive conversation about what the future of the bill could look like if it does not pass (whether that be in or out of committee). He suggested that the "low hanging fruit" of the bill like barring questions about citizenship status, due process protections, and eliminating 287(g) contacts would remain, while the other parts would be cut to give it more universal support to see if it has a chance at passing.

■ Matthew Rothenberg

On meetings with staffers

[M]y partner and I weren't aware about the extent in which they actually supported the bill and where they lay along the issue of support for pro-immigrant causes. Matthew and I found that the representatives were oriented quite differently along the spectrum of support for the bill. Feeney was in support of the bill to the point where they thought the bill didn't go far enough while on the side one of the state senators was willing to make more compromises about provisions. The senators' representatives all seemed to note that on the senate side the "Safe Communities Act" was able to pass with ease since many of the representatives were freshly elected so the state senate as a whole had a more progressive nature. However, they also noted that the House side had a stronger opposition against the bill due to the more conservative nature, since many of the staffers were incumbents and from districts that weren't in total as blue as one might think Massachusetts is.

■ Next Steps

Introduction

As the coronavirus pandemic has spread all throughout the country and the world, Americans are more concerned with what the government can do to protect them than they have been for some time, and for good reason. We expect our government to recognize our concerns and keep us safe from them, but the fact is not everyone feels they are guaranteed the same level of protection. The Safe Communities Act is currently being voted on for the second time, and it hopes to provide more procedural protections pertaining to citizenship that will repair immigrants' distrust in law enforcement. It does not look like the bill is going to be passed, as the House side of the Joint Committee on Public Health and Safety has pushed back on the bill's communication limitations between ICE and state and local law enforcement. In this analysis of the next steps for the Safe Communities Act, we will discuss the options for the bill and its advocates going forward, as we work to provide better protection for Massachusetts residents.

Potential Outcomes

If the bill passes, training materials would be collected and developed for future introductory and professional development sessions, and state and local police departments would have to take stock of their capacity to provide due process rights to everyone regardless of the language they speak. While these logistics are important to settle quickly if the bill passes, there are three more likely scenarios where the bill does not pass. The first is if the bill does not make it out of committee, which could happen by getting voted down or sent to study (which happened in the bill's first iteration). This is the quickest and most likely way the bill could be stopped, as its most committed supporters are unlikely to push it through if they don't expect it to have a chance of passing in the house, which is still the assumption. In the event the SCA made it through the committee, House, and Senate, it still faces steep opposition from Governor Charlie Baker who has voiced his concern with the bill and even put forth a conflicting bill in the past.

What if it Fails?

COVID-19 has significantly changed the situation with regards to the state legislature passing bills. Due to this crisis demanding the immediate attention from the state's legislators, it might be unlikely that SCA passes. If SCA fails to pass the State House, then there will need to be rethinking of what provisions of the bill can be considered "low hanging fruit." Specifically, thinking must be done surrounding whether or not certain provisions of the bill are more likely to

be considered as viable to pass on a bipartisan basis. Maybe the clause about due process protections during immigration arrests would be viable to the side that has resisted the bill. However, this might upset many people within the actual coalition who feel that separation between local and state law enforcement and immigration enforcement is the most important aspect of the bill. The different cosigners, including Senator Eldridge, will have to rethink their strategy for getting it past the roadblock in the House of Representatives. Hopefully, small, incremental changes can lead to the ultimate goal SCA was aiming for: a state where immigrants have access to equal protection from the law and the state is safer overall. Lastly, the virtual immigrant's day for the State House on Thursday May 7th, where people will advocate for the issues most affecting the immigrant community in speaking sessions and roundtables with MIRA affiliated organizations, might be the place to start rethinking the advocacy efforts.

Our Roles

Matthew Rothenberg is a member of an organization on campus called the Right to Immigration Institute which helps file for immigrants' asylum and citizen status. The two of us have been in contact with the office of State Senator Sonia Chang-Díaz about the best way to direct our advocacy efforts. The senator's office has directed us to work with immigrant coalitions such as MIRA and the ACLU. Matthew Patton has been in touch rigorously reaching out to state representatives to meet and support SCA. Additionally, Matthew Rothenberg plans to publish an opinion piece in a Massachusetts state newspaper about how the SCA could ease tensions between the police, immigrant communities and the state at large during the COVID-19 crisis. As students are away from campus, we are postulating a direction for online advocacy campaigns.

Conclusion

Moving forward, we will continue to push for police reform to help our immigrant communities. The current status quo arrangements of law enforcement working closely with ICE just simply does not work for our Massachusetts communities, so change must come about somehow. Whether that means reform in the form of the SCA, or agreements on some of its provisions, there needs to be steps to address the inequities in law enforcement. Until activists and state legislators agree in support of the SCA agree on the proper strategy to confront this partisan blockage, immigrant communities will suffer, especially during the COVID-19 crisis. We hope to continue our efforts and to continue to closely watch immigrant and police-related issues.

■ Update

As of 11/23/20: Both the House and Senate components of the bill have been in the respective Committees on Ways and Means since July.

For more information

View the bill (MA legislature website):

S.1401: malegislature.gov/Bills/191/S1401

H.3573: malegislature.gov/Bills/191/H3573

Organization or Coalition support:

MIRA (Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition):

miracoalition.org/safe-communities

ACLU Massachusetts aclum.org/en/legislation

Addressing Sexual Violence on Higher Education Campuses

A comprehensive approach to how institutions of higher education address the issue of sexual violence on their campuses

Emily Fishman '20
Shania Thomas '21



Emily Fishman and Shania Thomas

There is a system of silence surrounding sexual violence on college campuses that fails survivors and misses the opportunity to protect all students. This system failure is characterized by unclear options for survivors following incidents of sexual violence, a lack of education on the issue, and insufficient support from universities. Bills H.4418/S.2580, An Act relative to sexual violence on higher education campuses, aims to address the issue of sexual violence on college campuses with commonsense policies that can help every student. The three key priorities of the bill are providing confidential resource advisors, implementing trauma-informed training, and connecting with off-campus crisis centers. These policies, coupled with annual campus climate surveys, will support students by providing agency and protecting them during their time at university.

■ The Bill

S.764/H.1209: An Act relative to sexual violence on higher education campuses

■ Elevator Speech

Our names are Emily Fishman and Shania Thomas. We are members of the Every Voice Coalition, a coalition of students, advocates, and universities working to fight sexual violence on college campuses. We are current college students in the Boston area studying health policy. Opportunity for academic success in a safe community is unequivocally important for all students during their time at institutions of higher education. Given that students comprise 20% of Boston's population, it is important that Massachusetts be a leader in protecting students. Currently, Massachusetts schools are failing us. One in five women and one in 16 men are targets of sexual violence during their time in college. There is a system of silence surrounding sexual violence on college campuses that fails survivors and misses the opportunity to protect all students. This system of silence is characterized by unclear options and insufficient support for survivors following instances of sexual violence, and a lack of education surrounding the issue. The solution to this system failure is a commonsense policy proposed by the Every Voice legislation, Bills H.4418/S.2580, which aims to implement confidential resource advisors, require trauma-informed training, and connect campuses with community crisis centers. These priorities, coupled with annual campus climate surveys, will support students by providing choice and protecting them during their time at university. As college students ourselves, we call on members of the House Ways and Means Committee to vote Bill H.4418 out favorably in order to protect all students.

■ Excerpts from Storybook

“It is easy to underestimate how much harm someone experiences when they experience sexual violence. How much it impacts potentially every little piece of their life. It would be so much easier if we could give people extensions on homework assignments and switch their rooms and call it a day but it’s way more complex than that...” – Sarah Berg, Director of Brandeis University Prevention and Advocacy Resource Center

“I am only 23 years old, I can’t imagine what my life would have been like if I had not been assaulted.... When we commit to our college of choice we should not commit to a lifetime of trauma.” – a survivor, speaking on the Every Voice Legislation

■ Op-Ed

Shania

The Creeps Come Out During Pandemics: Safeguarding our College Campuses

Put simply, coronavirus is scary. Like children in shadowy bedrooms, leery of the thing under the bed, it leaves us feeling vulnerable and uncertain. We feel unable to continue living because COVID-19 came and uprooted our lives. No matter what it is, the virus managed to infect everything without exception. But at least we have the faith, the hope, that in a matter of months, though it may take some time, it will eventually be over. While we may not be the same as before, we believe things will get better. Survivors of sexual violence on college campuses deserve this same hope.

What’s perhaps scarier than COVID itself is how eerily similar the emotions of the global community are to the emotions felt by sexual assault survivors. Sexual assault comes out of nowhere, when you least expect it. Even when you take precautions, like going out with a friend group to protect yourself, you’re still vulnerable. Once it happens, the influence of the event invades every aspect of your life. You can’t make it through your 90-minute class on the feminist movement because it triggers you, reminding you of how powerless you were to protect yourself. You feel violated and exposed, causing you to be more reclusive and isolated from your friends and family. Even going to the dining hall is a dangerous and heart-wrenching endeavor because the person who assaulted you is likely to be there as a fellow student still living in your dorm and eating in the same cafeteria. How can you stand to be within 6 feet of them?

That one moment will plague you forever. As said by the director of the Prevention, Advocacy & Resource Center (PARC) at Brandeis University, “It is easy to underestimate how much harm someone experiences when they experience sexual violence. How much it impacts potentially every little piece of your life. It would be so much easier if we could give

people extensions on homework assignments and switch their rooms and call it a day, but it’s way more complex than that.”

You feel isolated. You feel trapped. The only difference is, without proper help, such as access to crisis resources or just someone to help you navigate the world after an assault, you are not likely to recover in a matter of months. You will be changed without the hope of a better, brighter, and freer tomorrow.

How can we continue to ignore that fact after having experienced it for ourselves in a way that isn’t even quite comparable? We can’t, and there is still hope. We can flatten the curve of students who experience sexual violence on campus, one in five women and one in 16 men. We can help those who after such traumatizing events feel unsupported by the institutions which have taken charge of their safety and well-being. We can do this by implementing commonsense policies at every university and college in Massachusetts. Bill H.4418, known as the Every Voice Legislation, works to include confidential resource advisors (CRA), individuals who can assist survivors as well as those accused of violent action decide what their next steps are without initiating a Title IX investigation, as campus staff. CRAs are in contrast to mandatory reporters like resident advisors and on-campus Title IX officers, who are often the only on-campus resources for students who experience sexual violence.

The bill also mandates trauma-informed training on consent and bystander intervention as well as connections between institutions of higher education and local rape crisis centers to provide treatment options to students.

Rounding out the bill are the annual campus climate surveys, which will increase transparency and help lift the veil of silence that surrounds the issue. These reviews will allow schools to get data on sexual violence and misconduct prevalence on their campuses.

While legislators are currently rightfully focused on providing for the commonwealth’s needs as the coronavirus continues to spread and affect lives, it is still vital that we remember to safeguard a future for after we weather this storm. I encourage readers, while stuck at home with more time to pursue the things worth caring about, to call and email their state representatives to demand an extension order on H.4418 to June 2020.

Considering the way universities took every action possible to try to preserve the health and safety of students during the pandemic, why would we not expect the same tenacity and willingness to protect our students from sexual violence every semester? In all honesty, we should not only hope for it but demand it.

Shania Thomas is a junior at Brandeis University and a Central Massachusetts Organizing Lead for the Every Voice Coalition. At Brandeis, Shania majors in Health Policy and Politics with minors in Social Justice Policy and Legal Studies. She is also an Associate Justice for the Brandeis Student Union.

Emily

Students and Survivors Still Need Support – Even at Zoom University

Colleges are opening their doors to let students out for the semester, then swiftly closing them to combat the global pandemic of COVID-19. As a result, many of us, particularly legislators, may continue to ignore the issues that occur on college campuses. Sexual assault on college campuses may not be at the top of everyone's legislative agenda as we focus on physical distancing; however, it is real, present, and it affects the lives of students who remain on campus, those who have been sent home, and those who will return to campus next school year. In fact, for those who have been assaulted, sexual violence may be at the forefront of their minds, as isolation continues and anxiety builds.

Millions of people around the U.S. have found themselves staying at home these past few weeks, and we very well may be staying at home for months to come. For those of us who are lucky enough, we are enjoying the solitude, or joking about our boredom on Facebook with memes and TikTok dances.

Behind the humor, there is a loneliness we all share, but for many this time of isolation lacks peace. This is especially true for those of us who have been uprooted due to the coronavirus, including students sent home from college. With many classes now taking place on Zoom, a video conferencing service, some students have dubbed their new school experience "Zoom University." Although college campuses are closed, the memories and experiences students have had on campus haven't faded. When we left, we not only brought our happy memories of friendship and academic success home from campus; for those who have experienced it, memories of trauma at school were brought home along with our bedding and mini-fridges.

While physical distancing is an effort to protect our physical health, it stimulates mental health issues. Many are experiencing mental illness for the first time or finding that their pre-existing conditions are flaring up or worsening. This may include survivors of sexual assault who were seeking treatment on campus at their universities, or those who were unable to seek treatment due to a lack of clarity, knowledge, or support.

One in five women and one in 16 men are targets of sexual violence during their time in college. This number is even higher for people of color, people with disabilities, LGBTQ students, first generation college students, and members of other marginalized communities. Currently, there is a system of silence surrounding sexual assault on college campuses that fails survivors and misses the opportunity to protect all students. Bill H.4418, which currently sits before the House of Representatives in Massachusetts, aims to address this issue with commonsense

policies that can help every student. The three key priorities of the bill are the installation of confidential resource advisors, implementation of trauma informed training, and connection with off-campus crisis centers. These policies, coupled with annual campus climate surveys, will support students by empowering them through choice and protecting them during their time at university – including now, after mandatory enrollment at "Zoom U."

A survivor that I spoke with told me "I am only 23 years old; I can't imagine what my life would have been like if I had not been assaulted . . . When we commit to our college of choice we should not commit to a lifetime of trauma." The issue of sexual assault on college campuses may be out of sight, but it is not out of mind. The trauma that remains with student survivors could be alleviated if they were given access to treatment options and provided with confidential guidance by their universities following instances of sexual violence.

So no, this is not the time to ignore protections for college students. During this vulnerable time, it is more important than ever that universities support their students in any way they can. This includes protecting and supporting students who are survivors of sexual assault as they navigate their new normal. Colleges and universities can start by meeting the three priorities of H.4418. You can start by signing the petition to Demand Justice for Massachusetts Campus Sexual Assault Survivors.

Emily Fishman is a senior at Brandeis University studying Health: Science, Society, and Policy with a minor in Legal Studies. She is finishing up her degree at Zoom University.

■ House Ways & Means Script

Representative Michlewitz, as a graduate of Northeastern University, you know firsthand that students make up a substantial part of the population and personality of Boston. A true college town, students comprise 20% of Boston's population. With the number of students and universities in Boston, and throughout the state of Massachusetts, it is important that Massachusetts continues to be a leader in providing opportunities for academic success in a safe community for all students during their time at institutions of higher education.

As students in the Boston area ourselves, Shania and I are deeply concerned with issues surrounding campus safety, particularly those involving sexual violence. Currently, there is a web of insufficient support mechanisms for survivors of sexual violence on college campuses. The system of silence surrounding sexual violence fails survivors and misses opportunities to protect all students. This system failure is characterized by unclear options for survivors following incidents of sexual violence, a lack of education on the issue, and insufficient support from universities.

In order to address this system failure and protect all students, the Every Voice Legislation, which includes Bill H.4418, An Act relative to sexual violence on higher education campuses, seeks to carry out commonsense policies that can help every student. Through holistic survivor support, H.4418 intends to implement three key priorities in Massachusetts higher education institutions: confidential resource advisors to allow students to navigate policies confidentially, trauma informed training on consent and bystander intervention, and memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with off-campus resources to provide treatment options for survivors. These policies, coupled with annual campus climate surveys, will support students by providing choice and protecting them during their time at university.

We understand that there are financial concerns with any bill seeking to implement new policies for higher education institutions. However, we think that you will find that the costs to state and local governments and colleges are minimal, and well worth the investment.

The first provision, the implementation of confidential resource advisors, has some financial implications for the state and for higher education institutions, however, these costs can be mitigated. The creation of the confidential resource advisor will require hiring a new employee or adding additional responsibility for a current employee. Schools can mitigate the cost by choosing to have a current employee take on the role. Many argue that the confidential resource advisor role is unnecessary due to the existence of a Title IX officer, however when students go to a Title IX officer, an investigation is necessitated. Students deserve the opportunity following sexual violence to navigate policies confidentially and choose how to proceed.

Institutions will have to pay for trauma-informed trainings and programming either through third parties or through the development of their own materials by those versed in topics of sexual violence, bystander intervention, and the institution's policies on sexual violence. Although this could incur some costs for universities in developing curriculum, schools already implement these trainings for new students. Bill H.4418 asks that these trainings be extended to newly-hired faculty and staff, which is also common practice across many institutions. Ensuring that faculty and staff receive trauma-informed training will protect students and safeguard their power to make an informed decision.

Creating connections with off-campus resources is achieved through memorandums of understanding (MOUs) between community-based sexual assault crisis centers and institutions of higher education. MOUs can be costly, especially for smaller schools with fewer funds. There are, however, provisions in the bill for waivers from

the department of higher education, should an MOU be unattainable or unnecessary for an institution. Creating formal relationships with off-campus crisis centers allows survivors choice in their treatment. It also has the potential to benefit schools by allowing them to provide a wider array of resources that may not be available on campus for survivors of sexual violence.

The campus climate survey aspect requires that the state convene a task force to create a model survey, which will be completed by colleges every two years. This aspect of H.4418 will have associated costs, however many schools already conduct campus climate surveys. The creation of a model survey will be a one-time cost, and this investment offsets costs for institutions. This provision ensures that the information is made available to the public, which will increase transparency and awareness surrounding sexual violence, and ultimately allow for evidence-based policy to protect students from sexual assault. Ensuring the results are publicly available is the most important aspect of the campus climate surveys – and this comes at no additional cost for institutions.

While these policies have associated costs, many schools already have similar policies in place – this bill only asks that schools continue upholding these policies. Some argue that because schools are already addressing components of this bill on their own, the legislation is not necessary. Although some institutions have these policies in place, it is important to create legislative safeguards, like H.4418, against those universities and colleges that choose to neglect their responsibility to their students, faculty, and staff.

Representative Michlewitz, we see you have supported higher education legislation in the past that aimed to make the college experience safer and more secure for people of all genders. We ask you once again, to support safety for students and survivors on Massachusetts college campuses and vote Bill H.4418 out favorably in the Committee on House Ways and Means.

■ Letter to the Legislator

Dear Senator Barrett,

Boston is a true college town. Students comprise 20% of the city's population, and there are several universities in Waltham alone. As a Harvard graduate, you can understand the significance of the quantity and quality of Massachusetts' higher education institutions. Given this significance, it is important that Massachusetts continue to be a leader in providing the opportunity for academic success in a safe community for all students during their time in college.

Our names are Emily Fishman and Shania Thomas. As residents of Waltham, and students at Brandeis University, we are deeply concerned with safety on campus, especially as

it pertains to sexual violence. National studies estimate that one in five college women and one in sixteen college men will be the victims of an attempted or completed rape during their years at college. Currently, there is a system of silence surrounding sexual violence on college campuses that fails survivors and misses opportunities to protect all students. This system failure is characterized by unclear options for survivors following sexual violence, a lack of education on the issue, and insufficient support for survivors from their universities.

In order to address this system failure, the Every Voice legislation, which includes Bills H.4418/S.2580, intends to institute commonsense policies at institutions of higher education in Massachusetts that can help every student. These policies include mandating confidential resource advisors on every campus to allow students to navigate policies confidentially, providing trauma informed training on consent and bystander training to all new students and employees, and connecting with crisis centers off-campus to provide survivors with treatment options. These policies, coupled with annual campus climate surveys, will support students by empowering them through choice and protecting them during their time at university.

Many of the provisions of the Every Voice legislation are already common practice at Massachusetts institutions of higher education. Some might say that because schools are already instituting these policies, this legislation is not a necessity. Although some institutions have these policies in place, it is important to create legislative safeguards, like the Every Voice Legislation, for those universities and colleges that choose to neglect their responsibility to their students, faculty, and staff.

As current college students in Massachusetts, we ask that you support Bills H.4418/S.2580 in order to ensure the safety of students on campus following instances of sexual violence.

Sincerely,

Emily Fishman & Shania Thomas

■ Excerpts from Campaign Journals

Emily

On meeting with Representative Farley-Bouvier and her Legislative Aide, Madalyn Thursby

Representative Farley-Bouvier presented the House version of the bill, H.4418. We spoke directly with her and her legislative aide, Madalyn Thursby. Both of them were very welcoming and Representative Farley-Bouvier told us that the Every Voice Coalition is one of her favorite groups to meet with. She informed us that the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities in Massachusetts, AICUM, is raising the question of why the Confidential Resource Advisor and Title

IX officer cannot be the same person. She asked us to compile a whip list of who supports and who does not support the bill as we go about our work and relay the information to her. This meeting was very positive, and Shania and I left feeling motivated and purposeful in our advocacy efforts.

Shania

On a call with organizers from Every Voice MA

I encouraged the other students on the line to try and find similar resources on their campuses. People seemed impressed by what I had to offer, which I took note of. Resources, manpower, and information were key to being appreciated. It is nice that someone might be interested in helping, but it is much better if you have something to bring to the table. I was fairly sure of this walking into the meeting, but I had not realized how much I had to offer.

On meeting with Josh Hendricks, Legislative Director for Rep. James Arciero

What was really most notable about the meeting, was that we only talked about the logistics of the bill for a few minutes. What he seemed most interested in was why we were advocating for it. To me, it seemed somewhat self-evident. Female students at a Massachusetts university are likely to advocate for just about any “liberal cause” they can find and this one hit close to home for our demographic. Truthfully, it was a valid question because he was really asking why he should advocate for the bill by presenting it to the representative. Why does H.4418 matter? It was a great question that I honestly had not been expecting to be asked. Having set up meetings with members of the Ways and Means Committee for a bill that was in Ways and Means, I thought they would want to spend the short time discussing the fiscal implications of the bill. In fact, I had directed the conversation in that direction from the beginning since the limited fiscal implications were a highlight of the bill. However, Josh had little to no interest in that.

I told him that as a woman on a college campus I was in a vulnerable population and I felt that vulnerability when walking at night across the Great Lawn when the streetlights go out. That having friends who had used these resources, which are thankfully available at Brandeis, I understand their importance to helping survivors of sexual violence overcome the trauma. He seemed to appreciate that answer. He asked if we had any literature, which we unfortunately did not have since our storybook was not approved, and gave us his contact information. Along with it, I received a major lesson from this meeting. While the facts, logic, and statistics are important, the emotional aspect is imperative. Representatives are bombarded all day with things that could be done, but it is my job to convince them that it needs to be done. That whatever I

am asking for really makes a difference in their constituents' lives. I have to make them care.

■ Next Steps

Given the current state of affairs in the U.S., we are very proud of our progress in advocating for bills H.4418/S.2580, the House and Senate versions of the Holistic Survivor Support Bill.

If we could have continued our advocacy work at Brandeis, we would have gone through with the banner drop we were planning in conjunction with the Every Voice Coalition. Shania was working with FMLA [the Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance student group] as well as Ali Hagani, a Brandeis student and campus lead for Every Voice on coordinating this. We also would have attended Take Back the Night, which we were able to attend remotely on Thursday, April 23rd.

Continuing advocacy for the Every Voice Legislation, beyond the 2019-2020 school year, would have included work within the Every Voice Coalition. Every Voice is currently aiming to “graduate” these bills, as many of the students currently working on the legislation started their advocacy work during their first year at college. They are graduating, or have graduated, and these bills have not yet passed in Massachusetts. Although we achieved much of what we set out to do in February and March, including meeting with legislators on March 5th, April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month. We would have attended much of the on-campus programming, including Take Back the Night, as well as Every Voice advocacy work, such as the “graduation” day at the State House.

We were also hoping to continue working with Senator Michael O. Moore, who presented S.2580. When we met with him on our first lobbying day at the State House, he mentioned that he would like to have a “College Day,” where students from different colleges would come in and speak to representatives about the Every Voice legislation.

Potential lobbying problems could include the issue that Representative Tricia Farley-Bouvier brought to our attention when we met with her in March. She informed us that the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities in Massachusetts, AICUM, is raising the question of why the confidential resource advisor and Title IX officer cannot be the same person. Additionally, a comprehensive whip list for both the House and the Senate should be compiled to determine the bill's supporters as well as its opposition. Such a list could be crucial for understanding what barriers it faces.

■ Update

As of January 2021: The bills passed in the House and the Senate, and the sponsor of the sister bill in Connecticut, Republican Senator Tony Hwang, reached out to Governor Charlie Baker's administration to express the importance of passing this legislation in Massachusetts. Governor Baker signed the bill into law on January 12, 2021.

For more information

View the bill (MA legislature website):

S.764: malegislature.gov/Bills/191/S764

H.1209: malegislature.gov/Bills/191/H1209

Organization or Coalition support:

See Jane Doe Inc., janedoe.org/whats_happening/policy_action/

The Every Voice Coalition everyvoicema.org

Increasing Access to Menstrual Products

Providing prisons, homeless shelters and public schools with disposable menstrual products to any menstruator at no cost

Mercedes Helm '21

Leah Trachtenberg '21

This bill proposes that prisons, homeless shelters, and public schools provide disposable menstrual products such as pads and tampons to any menstruator at no cost, and in a convenient and non-stigmatizing manner. The most vulnerable members of society, low-income and impoverished students, the homeless, and incarcerated persons are excluded from school, work, and public life as a result of the barriers to receiving adequate supplies. This is exacerbated by the general stigma surrounding menstruation and can prevent people from reaching out to receive the support that they need to remain active during their period. This issue has largely been ignored in Massachusetts as current legislation regarding prisons, homeless shelters, and public schools does not include any language regarding disposable menstrual products nor are there any sections discussing menstruation.

■ The Bill

H.1959/S.1274: An Act to increase access to disposable menstrual products in prisons, homeless shelters, and public schools

■ Elevator Speech

Massachusetts is a leader in equality and opportunity. We were the first state to enact public education and have always been at the forefront of healthcare. Currently, we as a commonwealth are striving for equal access to education and quality of life regardless of sex or socioeconomic status. Menstruators are facing inequity as our bodies and biological processes are not viewed as a health and human right's issue. Many are suffering as a result.

The I AM bill seeks to address this inequality by providing disposable menstrual products to three particularly vulnerable populations: people who are incarcerated, homeless people, and students. The bill requires they be provided for free and in an accessible, non-stigmatizing manner. This is important as some menstruators cannot access disposable menstrual products either due to cost or



Mercedes Helm



Leah Trachtenberg

lack of physical access. It is estimated that menstruators like me spend more than \$2,000 in our lifetime on disposable menstrual products. This spending comes from using about 20 tampons or pads per cycle with an average box of 36 tampons or panty liners costing \$7 at the drugstore. Those of us who cannot afford such products are stripped of their dignity as they often turn to degrading options for menstrual hygiene such as dirty clothes and rags. Even though I can access and afford these products, I've had to use toilet paper when I didn't have period products readily available and these experiences have been uncomfortable.

Lack of access to these products can also lead to poor health outcomes such as toxic shock syndrome or infection due to using unhygienic alternatives to disposable menstrual products. Furthermore, students suffer from lack of education through absences as the discomfort from physical pain and lack of product to protect their clothing keeps them out of the classroom. These are serious issues that can no longer be ignored.

The I AM bill would provide the disposable menstrual products that these menstruators need and deserve. As such, we ask that you vote favorably on Bill H.1959/S.1274: An Act to increase access to disposable menstrual products in prisons, women's shelters, and public schools and discuss the issue with the chair and vice chair of your committee.

■ Excerpts from Storybook

"Policy is a driving force of our thoughts and behaviors." – Linzy Rosen, Brandeis sophomore, Founding Member of Brandeis Period

Carter Mucha is a student advocate who worked with her peers in Brookline to enact Warrant Article 20 which ensures access to disposable menstrual products in all public buildings in Brookline. For Carter, "menstrual equity is an integral part of gender equality."

■ Op-Ed Mercedes

Enough About Toilet Paper, What About Tampons?

Like many others, my college moved to online classes and shut down the dorms in response to COVID-19. Now at home in Texas, I found myself heading to the grocery store with my sister when we began discussing how people have been stockpiling and hoarding resources "just in case." My sister warned me that a lot of shelves might be empty when we got to the grocery store, but I brushed it off. I'd read about people obsessively buying toilet paper and hand sanitizer and had seen aisles emptied of products in other stores. But when she told me that people had been stockpiling tampons, I was

blindsided. I was expecting my period the following week and if they were cleared out, I didn't know what I would do. I had never had to worry about not having period products. It just wasn't something I thought of. I joked that I would just free bleed or spend the week in a bathtub, but I was lucky that the grocery store we went to had decided to limit these items to three per customer. Thank God they still had some in stock. I grabbed my three items and went home, thankful for tampons for the first time in my life. The sad reality is that there are people who must go without menstrual hygiene products, not because everyone is scrambling to stockpile what they can, but because of the cost and availability. An average menstruator spends between \$1,000-2,000 on period products in their lifetime, using about 20 period products per cycle, with a box of 36 tampons or panty liners from the drugstore costing about seven dollars. The price skyrockets for organic cotton products. Needless to say, it adds up.

If you couldn't afford that monthly cost or simply couldn't access those products, what would you do? Would you use dirty rags and clothing? Bleed into whatever you're wearing and risk infection? These are the options that many people have faced since before the COVID-19 climate of stockpiling fear.

Vulnerable populations are hit even harder by this reality. For instance, students who cannot afford sanitary products miss school because of their periods. Incarcerated menstruators have extremely limited access to period products and the cost in the canteen can add up to two weeks of wages. Homeless shelters often cannot afford to provide these items, as they are the least-donated item.

The next question is, why? Periods are a natural process of the biologically female body, so why is it so much harder to get our hands on period products than toilet paper? As a society, we've built a culture of silence and shame around periods. I was lucky enough to go to an all-girl high school where you just asked around or shouted down the hallway if you needed period products. I grew up in an environment where periods weren't shameful, where I didn't have to hide my tampon in my sleeve, hand, or bag when I went to the restroom. As a result, I don't feel the same shame. However, I am no stranger to the shame others feel regarding menstruation. My own dad won't let me say the word "tampon" around him.

The truth is periods are nothing to be ashamed of. It's your body's way of saying no eggs were fertilized so let's get rid of everything we were preparing for. It's not as though anyone asked to have a period, and without birth control, it's not something that can be avoided.

As this is a mostly unavoidable, natural human process, period products should be a right, not a commodity. Prisons should not be limiting how many products people get. It is inhumane. Schools should provide their students with the

products they need just as they provide toilet paper. Homeless shelters should include period products in hygiene packages for people. As a society there are so many things we “should” be doing for menstruators. But we aren’t.

There’s a very real solution here. The I AM bill, written by the MassNOW coalition, states clearly that prisons, homeless shelters, and public schools must provide these products for free and in a non-stigmatizing manner. There are people who desperately need this bill to pass. All you need to do to help is contact your representative or senator and ask them to support this bill. You can help, so why not do it?

Here is where you can find the name and contact information for your state representatives: house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative.

Mercedes Helm is a junior at Brandeis University majoring in Health, Science, Society and Policy and minoring in Hispanic Studies.

Dariana

Why Now is the Time to Act on Menstrual Equity

18,471. That’s the number of people experiencing homelessness in Massachusetts according to a 2019 count conducted by the Housing and Urban Development Continuum of Care. That means that there are more than 9,000 homeless menstruators in the commonwealth. “Being homeless, I could never afford what I wanted in hygiene supplies. I would use whatever I could get” said one client of BRAWS: Bringing Resources to Aid Women’s Shelters.

Without proper menstrual products, homeless and low-income menstruators often turn to “alternative methods” such as socks and old rags. These alternative, unsanitary methods can lead to rashes and infections. In order to treat these infections homeless menstruators have to go to the hospital. According to the American Hospital Association and the American Hospital Directory, Massachusetts has about 3,603 hospital beds available and an estimated 7,512 Massachusetts residents that will require hospitalization due to the coronavirus. We need to prioritize keeping as many hospital beds open as possible. To do this, we need to take the steps to give people the resources to take care of themselves and avoid preventable hospital trips.

Without access to enough menstrual products, low income and homeless menstruators often turn to alternative, unsanitary measures such as used rags, old socks, torn pieces of clothing, diapers, and, when available, toilet paper. These makeshift alternatives increase risk of bacterial infections, yeast infections, and toxic shock syndrome, sending menstruators to the hospital. Passing the I AM Bill (H.1959/S.1274: An Act to increase access to disposable

menstrual products in prisons, homeless shelters, and public schools) would help to ensure that we keep our medical resources available for the thousands of estimated coronavirus patients.

The I AM Bill would mandate that all Massachusetts schools, homeless shelters, and prisons to provide free disposable menstrual products in a non-stigmatizing manner. This would mean that all menstruators, not just individuals who identify as women and girls, would have access to these sanitary products without facing the shame and stigma that is connected to periods.

Menstruators pay more than \$2,000 on disposable period products alone in their lifetime, not including related products such as Midol, new underwear due to stains, acne medication, heating pads, and birth control to regulate one’s cycle. For someone who struggles to pay for housing and food, the cost of a natural, bodily function can be impossible to cover. Passing the I AM Bill would mean that homeless menstruators would not have to resort to the unsanitary alternatives that lead to infections and hospital visits.

By increasing access to menstrual products for the Massachusetts homeless population, students, and imprisoned people, we can ensure that our medical resources are reserved for the thousands of patients who are expected to be hospitalized due to the coronavirus. This way we can save the lives of more Massachusetts residents and hopefully, flatten the curve.

Massachusetts residents should call Senator Michael Rodrigues, Senator Cindy Friedman, and Representative Daniel Cullinane to vote H.1959/S.1274 out favorably.

Leah Trachtenberg is a junior at Brandeis studying Women and Gender Studies, Near Eastern and Judaic Studies, Social Justice and Social Policy, and history.

■ House Ways & Means Script

Mr. Chairman Rodrigues,

My name is Leah Trachtenberg and I am a resident of Methuen, a student at Brandeis University, and am working for Senator Rausch. I am here with my colleague, Mercedes Helm, another student at Brandeis.

Over the past few months, we have been working to pass House Bill 1959/Senate Bill 1274: An Act to increase access to disposable menstrual products in prisons, homeless shelters, and public schools. Massachusetts is a leader in equality and opportunity. We were the first state to enact public education and have always been at the forefront of healthcare. Currently, we as a commonwealth are striving for equal access to education and quality of life regardless of sex or socioeconomic status. But this is not the case

for many menstruators. Jordan Latham of the YWCA of Southeastern Massachusetts tells a story of one of the girls she works with. This girl is missing school while menstruating because of the sock-pad and resulting infections. She and many menstruators like her do not have the same access to education as their peers due to their biology and socioeconomic class. This is why S.1274/H.1595, or the I AM Bill, should be a priority for your committee and voted out favorably.

Menstrual health and equity is an issue of importance to Mercedes and me because as people who menstruate, we understand how uncomfortable it can be to be on your period without the appropriate products. But this biological process can cost more than \$2,000 in a person's lifetime. This can make it hard for low-income menstruators to purchase the products they need to go to work or school. One study by MassNow found that 56% of school nurses reported students missing school in order to access these products. This can severely limit the opportunities and equity of access to education in the commonwealth that founded the public education system.

Moreover, disposable menstrual hygiene products are the least-donated items to homeless shelters, making products virtually inaccessible to those most vulnerable financially and hygienically. Inmates of state prisons only make \$0.14 to \$1 per hour in the job opportunities available to them. This makes purchasing menstrual products, which can cost around \$4, impossible when also facing legal fees. Those who cannot afford such products are stripped of their dignity as they often turn to degrading options for menstrual hygiene such as dirty clothes and rags. Lack of access to these products can lead to poor health outcomes such as toxic shock syndrome or infection due to using these alternatives to disposable menstrual products.

The I AM bill is the solution. Unequal access to education based on one's sex cannot be ignored. Forcing menstruators into unhygienic practices because of their socioeconomic status cannot be ignored. Unfortunately, within the commonwealth, this issue affects those who have been historically disadvantaged, as low-income, homeless, and incarcerated populations are disproportionately comprised of people of color and queer folks.

With the I AM bill, public schools, homeless shelters, and state prisons and jails would be required to provide access to disposable menstrual products including but not limited to tampons and pads for free in a non-stigmatizing manner. This would give low-income families and students, homeless persons, and prisoners access to menstrual products so they do not have to choose between their health and well-being and the other necessary elements of their lives like school or work.

I understand that there are school districts, shelters, and prisons that may have concerns about how to pay for the I AM Bill as it exists as an unfunded mandate. In addressing this I would like to highlight programs currently being executed in the state. Last year Brookline passed legislation to provide menstrual products in all public buildings. Brookline allocated \$40,000 upfront for the first year and estimates that an additional \$7,500 will be needed each year to maintain the program. This initial cost is needed to install the dispensing boxes in all of the bathrooms which can cost around \$150 to \$200 per box. Brookline's total budget is around \$300 million, meaning that their menstrual products program is a relatively inexpensive way to ensure equal access to education, health and opportunity. Boston Public Schools provides another example of the costs and implementation of this program. BPS's pilot program calls for non-stigmatizing access to menstrual products in schools serving grades 6-12. Mayor Walsh has allocated \$100,000 for the first year, in which the boxes have to be installed. This is again a relatively small price, considering the \$1.09 billion budget for the school system.

There are a number of potential avenues to consider for funding this program, especially in the commonwealth's low-income communities. One option being considered by Senator Jehlen's office and the MassNOW coalition is to reach out to distributors of menstrual products and negotiate a contract. This would result in lower costs for the state, especially after the first year when the only costs are the actual products and maintenance. Another option is to consider establishing grants for low-income communities to reduce the potential financial burden this could place on municipalities already struggling to maintain a reasonable and responsible budget. Further examples can be found in states like New York, which has passed a similar piece of legislation pertaining to public schools, and Maryland and Texas, which require free menstrual products to be provided automatically to prisoners.

Some detractors have argued that it should be the menstruator's responsibility to purchase their own products. However, in response I ask: is it each person's responsibility to buy and carry with them their own toilet paper, hand soap and paper towels? All of these products are necessary to maintain people's health and hygiene, but only menstrual products are not provided for free in bathrooms.

Mr. Chairman, I implore you and your colleagues on the Ways and Means Committee to make this bill a priority and vote it out of committee favorably. By supporting this bill, you can ensure the health and well-being of Massachusetts residents so that they may continue to live their lives without unnecessary stigmatization, and can fully participate in our society and economy. Thank you.

■ Letter to the Legislator

Representative Thomas M. Stanley
Massachusetts State House
Dear Representative Stanley,

My name is Mercedes Helm, and I am writing to you today along with Leah Trachtenberg. Leah and I both Waltham residents attending Brandeis University, and Leah is a Massachusetts voter from Methuen who currently interns on Senator Rausch's campaign committee. We admire your work on bills for public health in our community such as Bill H.1165, An Act establishing a community health center transformation fund. To us, this shows compassion for your constituents and dedication to improving public health.

We are writing to you because there is a widespread issue of inequality in Massachusetts. There are populations who lack access to basic menstrual hygiene due to accessibility. As menstruators ourselves, this issue is of personal importance. Leah and I have faced the difficulties of menstruation. We are fortunate enough to be able to afford and access these products, even as college students on budgets. But those who cannot pay for them or cannot access them are forced to use items such as rags and dirty clothing instead. Not only is this unsafe and can lead to infection, but it strips these people of their dignity and prevents students from attending school and adults from pursuing work.

The answer to this issue is bill H.1959/S.1274, An Act to increase access to disposable menstrual products in prisons, homeless shelters, and public schools. This bill would require these institutions to provide disposable menstrual products to any menstruator at no cost and in a non-stigmatizing manner. In providing free access to these products, this legislation assures the dignity of disadvantaged menstruators. There are already pilot programs in place in Brookline and Boston public schools due to the outcry against this inequality. In Brookline, disposable menstrual products are available in all public buildings, while the BPS is currently required to provide these products in nurses' offices for schools teaching grades 6-12.

Some may argue that it is a menstruator's responsibility to purchase these items for herself, but no one needs to bring toilet paper or soap to public bathrooms. Menstruation is a natural, biological process, and the products needed should not be treated differently from toilet paper and soap, as these are provided for free for other biological processes.

As of now, this bill is in the Senate Ways and Means Committee and the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing, both difficult committees to pass through. To ensure this bill passes, we ask that you write a letter to Vice Chairman Daniel R. Cullinane or Chairwoman Cindy Friedman in support of menstrual equity and Bill H.1959/S.1274.

Thank you,
Mercedes Helm
Leah Trachtenberg

■ Excerpts from Campaign Journals

Mercedes

On meeting with Vishni, organizer for free menstrual products in Brookline

Vishni discussed her role in getting Warrant Article 20 passed as well as addressing push-back from members of the community who viewed the legislation as unnecessary. She stressed the importance of these products being in all bathrooms rather than just women's rooms, the push-back this received, and educating people as to why this needed to be included in the legislation.

During the meeting we learned a lot about implementing policy, the importance of educating people who express opposition, and perseverance in policy activism. Vishni gave us an interesting perspective as a student activist for menstrual equity. I will say that we had thought this meeting would be more about her experiences in dealing with menstrual equity from a personal standpoint and instead we came out with more of an expert opinion and activist point of view, though these are still relevant and important.

Leah

On meeting with Evie Hobbs and Dina Nathanson, aides for Sen. Barrett

At the meeting, we learned that Dina is a Brandeis alumna and had majored in HSSP, same as Mercedes. For us this helped to build our connection with the aides. It also meant that Dina would be someone who would understand that period poverty affects certain groups more than others. This made us hopeful that we could convince the aide to speak with Senator Barrett about the issue.

They both expressed that they personally support the I AM Bill and would like to see it pass in this session, but that the Senator is a "numbers guy." They explained that as with most bills, in order to convince Senator Barrett to support the bill they needed to be able to show him data to prove that passing this bill would be a fiscally sensible action. They did give us some specifics as to what would be helpful. They first wanted an estimate as to how much a dispensing box costs and, if the state were able to work with a manufacturer, how much would products cost based on similar programs and contracts. They also asked for comparisons of how the program would potentially work in Massachusetts with Scotland's policy, which had been enacted February 27 and made pads and tampons free to everyone.

On meeting with Representative Ashe

Representative Ashe explained that he was more likely to support the school bill and thought that bill was more likely to pass the House. While Mercedes and I tried to explain the

full effects on period poverty, go beyond young menstruators, we were not able to convince him to support H.1959. This conversation did highlight another concern in getting the I AM Bill passed. There being a bill that is similar to the I AM Bill but a bit more conservative would make it harder to advocate for the I AM Bill in the House which is closer to the center of the political spectrum than the Senate.

■ Next Steps

Among the potential next steps we would have taken in advocating for this bill, one major room for improvement to our lobbying efforts would have been to reach out and work more closely with coalitions like MassNOW and menstrual equity organizations such as PERIOD or Dignity Matters. We had attempted to reach out to MassNOW earlier in the semester, but I believe that if we were to reach out again, now that we have a greater understanding of the bill, we would have been able to more accurately describe what sort of resources and collaboration we were looking for as well as share with them the resources we had.

It would also be helpful to reach out to other menstrual equity groups. Three organizations that would serve as good resources are PERIOD, Dignity Matters, and Massachusetts YWCAs. All three of these organizations are involved in the MassNOW coalition but reaching out to them separately might give opportunities to receive more first-hand testimony, as these groups work more closely with those actually affected by period poverty. Similarly, reaching out to homeless shelters and social workers would also lead to more first-hand testimony regarding both the homeless population and incarcerated population in Massachusetts. These two populations were challenging to address in our research and lobbying efforts because there are more concerns for these groups in giving and distributing their testimonies.

Following these collaborations, we would then reach out and lobby more state legislators. In particular, we would have reached out to the offices of Representative Driscoll and Representative McGonagle because they are both Democrats on the House Health Care Financing Committee who have not co-sponsored the bill. We specifically wanted to reach out to the Democrats on the committee because we had thought that our lobbying efforts would be more likely to be effective with Democrats, who generally tend to favor programs such as the one proposed in the I AM Bill and might be more sympathetic to the cause. We also thought that, as members of the majority party in the Massachusetts legislature, they would have more clout if and when the bill reached a general hearing. It also made sense for us to reach out to members who have not co-sponsored the bill because we were trying to increase the pressure put on Representative Daniel Cullinane, the House Vice Chair of the Joint Health Care Financing Committee (the chair position is currently vacant), to bring

H.1959 to a vote in his committee.

Furthermore, we would later meet with the chairs and vice-chairs of the relevant committees. For the Senate Ways and Means Committee we would have met with Senator Michael Rodrigues (chairman) and Senator Cindy Friedman (vice-chair of Ways and Means; Senate chair for Joint Health Care Financing) and for the House side of the Joint Health Care Financing Committee we would have met with Representative Daniel Cullinane.

Meeting with these three legislators would provide us with an opportunity to argue for why the I AM Bill and period poverty should be dealt with in this session. By having more first-hand testimony through collaboration with MassNOW and other organizations, I believe we would have a more effective argument for these leaders in order to argue that for thousands of people in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts this is an urgent issue. Testimony would have demonstrated that while the legislature might be prepared to try to propose this bill again in the next session, further visits to the hospital because of the use of unsanitary alternatives and missed classes for students would only cause further detriment and restrict upward mobility.

This bill could be a difficult one to implement. While it states that products should be made available in a convenient and non-stigmatizing manner, the only location specified is school bathrooms. Prisons and homeless shelters are not instructed on how to ensure this, which might lead to inconsistencies. While both institutions may also choose to use bathrooms, this might not be the case and it is difficult to ensure that products will truly be available in a non-stigmatizing and convenient manner. The bill does not mention the standard of products provided either, so there is no guarantee that all three institutions will use similar standards of products and that they will be appropriate for all menstruators. Furthermore, the definition of disposable menstrual products includes but is not limited to pads, tampons, and panty liners. As such, there is no specification for which products institutions must provide. Some menstruators are uncomfortable using tampons due to physical, cultural, or religious reasons and if institutions or shelters only provide tampons, those menstruators will still suffer.

Another problem could come from pushback from institutions who feel they cannot fund this bill. As it stands, the bill is an unfunded mandate and some school districts, and many homeless shelters may not be able to afford to provide products as instructed. If homeless shelters could afford to provide them regularly, they would. As such, leaving this bill as an unfunded mandate is a major problem. The bill is currently in the Senate Ways and Means Committee and Joint Health Care Financing Committee and the financial aspects of this bill could prevent it from passing through these committees.

■ Update

As of January 2021: As part of the FY21 budget process \$500,000 was allocated for the purpose of providing menstrual products at homeless shelters.

For more information

View the bill (MA legislature website):

S.1274: malegislature.gov/Bills/191/S1274

H.1959: malegislature.gov/Bills/191/H1959

Organization or Coalition support:

Mass NOW: massnow.org/our-work/supported-legislation

Dignity Matters: dignity-matters.org

Mass YWCA: ywboston.org/our-work/advocacy/PERIOD: period.org/

The Brandeis chapter of PERIOD: brandeis.edu/now/2019/november/mutiara-period-rosen.html;





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