Advocacy for Policy Change

Brandeis students work to reform Massachusetts law

September 2019
Advocacy for Policy Change is a part of a national program, ENACT: The Educational Network for Active Civic Transformation. ENACT is made possible by generous gifts from Ethics Center International Advisory Board Member Norbert Weissberg and his wife, former Board Member Judith Schneider; Board member Mark Friedman; and the Rice Family Foundation.

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 10th 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 2019, we anointed 24 citizen advocates for such issues as immigrant rights, juvenile justice, access to educational opportunities and renewable energy.

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 six.) This anthology contains excerpts from these assignments, updates on the bills, and links to more information on the relevant issues or organizations.

Once again, I must thank several people whose support over the past 10 years has been invaluable. This course would not exist without the ongoing support of Professor Richard Gaskins, my mentor and the Director of the Legal Studies Program. He and Daniel Terris, now Director Emeritus of the International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life, took the kernel of a unique idea and made it a reality. 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: David Duhalde, Kaitie Chakoian-Lifvergren, Andrew Hart, Misti Jeffers, Roz Kabrhel, Benjamin Kreider, Melissa Ross, Doug Smith, Cynthia Tschampl, and Christian Lopez.
This course is part of a national program based at Brandeis University launched in 2015, called ENACT: The Educational Network for Active Civic Transformation. Since the fall of 2016, ENACT Faculty Fellows have been teaching their own ENACT courses at colleges and universities in or near state capitals across the United States. There are now 29 trained Fellows in 29 states. In the 2019-20 academic year ENACT is expanding to all 50 states thanks to a multi-year grant from the Teagle Foundation’s “Education for American Civic Life” initiative.

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

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

ENACT is becoming a major voice in addressing challenges to American democracy by engaging young people around the country in civic activism built on knowledge, cooperation, justice and integrity. ENACT is supported by generous multi-year commitments from International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life International 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. For more information, see go.brandeis.edu/ENACT.

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

Melissa Stimell  
Academic Director, ENACT: The Educational Network for Active Civic Transformation  
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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 2019. The assignments were designed to develop and demonstrate the students’ understanding of the issues and the advocacy process.

Required Project Components

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Final Oral Presentation: “Present and Defend”
Bringing everything together, on May 1st, 2019, students gave brief oral presentations of their legislative advocacy projects and responded to questions from audience members.
Making Medication More Affordable

Making medication more affordable to reduce medication non-adherence due to cost

Monica Aronson ’19
Abby Kaplan ’19

This bill mandates that insurers provide “high value” and “cost effective” medications and treatments (e.g. insulin, asthma inhalers, epi-pens) at no cost to the patient and sets out the guidelines for an expert panel to decide which services, treatments, and medications qualify as such. Mandating that the insurance companies eliminate cost-sharing for preventative measures that have been proven to be effective reduces the burden that exorbitant healthcare costs have on people and families, reduces spending on “low value” treatments, and increases medication/treatment adherence. As a result, health outcomes improve and healthcare costs decrease.

The Bill:
S.611/H.966: An Act to promote value-based insurance design in the Commonwealth

Elevator Speech:
Our society is strongest when everyone is able to attain their highest potential level of health. As college students, health emergencies can impede our ability to complete assignments, go to work, and even postpone our graduation dates and entrance into the working world. We support bill S.611/H.966, An Act to promote value based insurance design in the Commonwealth, a bill that can help keep us, and other Massachusetts residents, healthy and capable of fulfilling our day to day activities and responsibilities. There are many people in Massachusetts who, despite having insurance, are still prevented from accessing lifesaving medications due to burdensome cost-sharing. Copays and deductibles are often so high that people ration medications or forgo care altogether. In many cases, lack of services and treatments lead to even more serious illness and even hospitalizations. The impact is most prevalent for those who do not have much disposable income, of which college students are a key population. We heard from a student who suffers from IBS. Because of high copays, she was unable to see a specialist to diagnose and treat her condition. Left with little option, she saw a primary care physician who was unable to prescribe the optimal medication and instead prescribed her a different one which gave her many negative side effects. If she had been able to afford the original copays, she very well may have avoided all of the trouble that she has gone through. An Act to promote value based insurance design seeks to establish a panel to determine which services and
Today, and as a result of these reforms, Massachusetts has expanded the number of people with access to health care. Based on MA legislation, the Affordable Care Act further tackled the number of uninsured individuals in the state. Massachusetts adopted “Romneycare,” healthcare legislation providing medical care to those in need. In 2006, we amended it to include Medicare and providing financial assistance to the unemployed and those in need. In 1965, we passed the Social Security Act, ensuring that workers would be able to retire with dignity. In 1935, we passed the Social Security Act, which guarantees the right to health care and life-saving medications. In 1965, we amended it to include Medicare and Medicaid, providing medical care to those in need. In 2006, Massachusetts adopted “Romneycare,” healthcare legislation providing care to those in need. In 1965, we amended it to include Medicare and Medicaid, providing medical care to those in need. In 2006, Massachusetts adopted “Romneycare,” healthcare legislation providing care to those in need. In 1965, we amended it to include Medicare and Medicaid, providing medical care to those in need.

Excerpts from Storybook

One Brandeis University student with IBS has struggled to get both a diagnosis and proper treatment. She was unable to afford co-payments, resulting in her inability to be prescribed an effective medication. She switched insurance in order to get better coverage, but that only led to being placed on a different medication which she has had issues with. Even seeing the specialist was a task itself, coming with its own co-pay. With the barrier imposed by high cost sharing, she has had to attend to many insurance struggles and avoidable medical complications, distracting her from focusing on school and work. The burden of cost sharing impacts lives, in and outside of the doctor’s office and prescription medications.

One woman spent 4 years as an EMT. She has responded to multiple calls where people who have diabetes or asthma have been in severe conditions because of lack of medications. In her own words, “With better access to care, call volume would drop. So many calls, particularly in large metropolitan areas, are from what we call ‘frequent fliers’ or people who call EMS all the time simply because they have no other way to access care, especially stuff that affects older people like hypertension and diabetes.” Additionally, she notes that having medications like EpiPens and inhalers on hand before EMS arrives “drastically increase the chances of survival.”

Op-Ed

Monica

The Sick, the Dying... the Insured?: The Rise of the Out of Pocket Killer

In 1935, the United States passed the Social Security Act, providing financial assistance to the unemployed and elderly. In 1965, we amended it to include Medicare and Medicaid, providing medical care to those in need. In 2006, Massachusetts adopted “Romneycare,” healthcare legislation to tackle the number of uninsured individuals in the state. In 2010, the United States followed suit and adopted the Affordable Care Act, based on MA legislation, further expanding the number of people with access to health care. Today, and as a result of these reforms, Massachusetts has a remarkably low uninsured rate. The right to health care has been slowly becoming an entrenched norm within our society. But despite the low number of uninsured residents, Massachusetts patients are facing a new problem. Insured individuals are finding themselves unable to see doctors. Unable to afford medications. The problem defining health care in the Massachusetts of 2019 is no longer being uninsured. It is being insured, but not being able to afford cost sharing.

Cost sharing is the cost patients pay out of pocket each time they require a service, treatment, or medication. According to the 2018 Annual Report on the Performance of the MA Healthcare System, member cost sharing grew 5.7% between 2016 and 2017, a rate higher than that of average wages, information, and premiums. The number of residents insured in a high deductible health plan exceeded 1 in 4 individuals in 2017. Findings from the MA Health Insurance Survey report that 43% of insured residents face health care affordability issues, issues that reach all socioeconomic, demographic, and health status groups.

Unable to afford copays and deductibles, our citizens have no choice but to go without the services and treatments that keep them alive. Disastrous health outcomes and skyrocketing emergency room costs follow. These neglected or rationed treatments are ones that people cannot live without. And I don’t mean just literally live. I mean really live. Experience the world live. Be a person live. For those with chronic conditions, these treatments allow them to do just that. When you can’t access these treatments however, you’ll die eventually - sometimes quickly. But there is also a cycle. A slow and painful and miserable cycle that you can fall into. You get sick, you get “saved” at the ER. You fall back in. You suffer complications. You miss work. You fall into debt. You can’t afford basic needs, let alone the things we do for joy. Can you imagine? Imagine having to decide if you are going to buy food or meds? What about rent? What if you have a family? You need to keep your job too. What happens when you miss work too much?

This is a reality that many people face. And doesn’t it seem cruel? Barbaric? It doesn’t seem like a reality that Massachusetts can continue to allow. We can do better. An Act To promote value based insurance design in the Commonwealth (S.611/H.966) is the next step that we need to take to ensure that our citizens are truly secure.

This bill will set up a panel of experts to evaluate health services, treatments, and medications on the basis of value and cost effectiveness and eliminate cost sharing for those determined to be high value cost effective. This bill would cover lifesaving treatments such as insulin, epi pens, and inhalers as well as doctor visits such as those for heart disease diagnosis.

This is the next natural installment to the social security norm. We tackled the uninsured, let’s tackle making care for the insured affordable too.
This bill is logical. It makes sense economically and morally. It fills the role of government and meets the needs of the people. And, with its relationship to chronic disease, it will only become more relevant. Chronic disease management is the area of health modern societies will increasingly need to focus on. We don’t die of infectious disease anymore, we live to experience chronic conditions. Adherence is key in management, and the price of misadherence is devastating, on the human life as well as the economy. Massachusetts has led the way once before in health care reform. We can do it again. Let’s show the nation how it’s done.

Abby

*It’s Time Out For Exorbitant Drug Costs*

If they could, they would all say the dog is to blame. Drug manufacturers, pharmacy benefit managers, and insurers are all guilty of pointing fingers at each other for increasing drug costs, like children who are asked, “Who stole the cookie from the cookie jar?” Except, more is at stake than just cookies. It is people’s health and lives that are at stake. The cost of drugs are going up, and it is about time that someone gets a time out.

The Health Care Cost Institute reported that, in 2016, the average cost of insulin per patient was $5705. This was nearly double the average cost of 2,864 per patient in 2012, just four years prior.

It’s not just diabetics who are affected, either. There are thousands of insured people all across Massachusetts who are unable to afford their prescription medication. In a nationwide study, it was found that 18% of Americans have forgone medication due to costs. This percentage does not even include people who ration their medications or are unable to even get a prescription because a doctor’s office visit incurs too great of a cost. Drug prices are going up uncontrollably across the board due to the complex system of manufacturers, pharmacy benefit managers, insurers, and other third parties and the inability for any of them to take responsibility.

The consequences are disastrous. Rationing or forgoing medication leads to worsened health outcomes, a higher rate of hospitalizations, and higher healthcare expenditure. A diabetic without insulin could lose vision, need an amputation, or face the very real possibility of death. But in the United States in 2019, there is no reason why people should be dying of diabetes. Or asthma. Or severe allergies. Or any number of treatable and preventable conditions, with effective medications that have been available for decades. Something must be done to address the outrageous out of pocket costs for so many people with insurance.

Thankfully, not everyone is just merely taking the price bullying. Though drug manufacturers, pharmacy benefit managers, and insurers are not all coming to play nicely at the table, many people and organizations are stepping up to address the issue. Last week, many Massachusetts residents shared their personal experiences with the legislators of the Health Care Financing Committee at the public hearing on Pharmaceutical Access, Cost & Transparency as they decide on bills related to the issue. One woman talked of having to choose every month between her car payment and the medication. Another had found a drug that worked well, but was forced on cheaper, ineffective medication when the good medication’s cost became too much for her family. Perhaps most alarmingly, a young woman with diabetes, spoke about having to rely on donations for insulin, but with the increasing cost, very few have any vials to spare. She is left with enough supply for 55 days, but no guarantees after that.

There are many bills that attempt to curb the increasing drug costs. In fact, according to the Health Policy Commission, over 50 bills have been filed this session in Massachusetts to address pharmaceutical spending growth. One in particular stands out. Senator Jason Lewis and Representative Tricia Farley-Bouvier filed “An act to promote value based insurance design,” which requires insurers to make services and treatments that are “high value” and “cost effective” available without a copay. If passed, lifesaving medications like insulin, inhalers, and Epipens would be free. People would no longer have to ration medications, rely on donations, or see if they could go without.

This bill focuses on the point that is the most crucial. What are people paying when they get to the pharmacy counter? Manufacturers price, rebates, and other things aside, if the answer to that question is still “more than most people can reasonably afford,” then people are still dying and it is still unacceptable.

If helping to improve lives by increasing access to medication is important to you, call and email your representatives and ask them to support S.611/H.966, “An act to promote value-based insurance design in the Commonwealth.” It is going to take a lot of time outs, but one day we can ensure that no more hands are going into the cookie jar.

*House Ways & Means Script:*

We believe that for our society to be at its strongest, every member must be at their healthiest. To reach this goal, means to provide a level of safety and security to each of our fellow citizens that enables one to live a life outside of the worries and fears and crippling impact of disease and unmet basic human needs. How can we say that government is fulfilling its duties, its responsibilities, its oath to our people, if we have individuals who are sick and who are dying of treatable conditions, solely based on their inability to pay?
Rates of cost sharing continue to rise across Massachusetts. According to the 2018 Annual Report on the Performance of the Massachusetts Health Care System, member cost sharing grew between 2016 and 2017 at a rate of 5.7%, a rate which was higher than that of inflation, average wages, and premiums. As of 2017, more than one in four members of the Commonwealth with commercial insurance were enrolled in high deductible health plans.

Unable to afford the cost-sharing, people with health insurance who pay monthly premiums go without the medical services and treatments that they so desperately require. They may skip doctor’s appointments, ration medications, or forgo care altogether, leading to avoidable hospitalizations, surgeries, and other disastrous outcomes. Additionally, each moment that a member of our community is caught in such a state, we lose what they may have otherwise contributed to the workings of our society. We must take action so that we can rise together. With the burden of cost significantly reduced, treatments become more accessible, and people are more easily able to take the measures necessary to care for their conditions and overall health. Just as the ACCESS bill increased access to contraceptives in part by eliminating copays, bill H.966 seeks to improve access to care for a whole range of Conditions.

The costs of implementing the bill are low. Establishing the panel to evaluate services and treatments has very little costs associated with it, as the members of the panel are unpaid. Moreover, the cost burden of eliminating cost sharing will be taken on by private insurers. The cost for the state only incurs for MassHealth, the combined Medicaid and Children’s Health Insurance Program, which already operates with copays between 1 and 4 dollars, with many exceptions already. That being said, the state still stands to see a long-term financial benefit from implementing value-based insurance. Eliminating cost sharing leads to an increase in medication adherence. In doing so, people will be able to better manage their health and conditions, reducing hospitalizations and more serious illnesses and conditions, which often come associated with a greater cost of treatment.

Opposition to the bill from a financial standpoint comes from people who think that providing access to care will lead to overuse and abuse, only increasing the amount of money the state has to spend on MassHealth. Our current system, with copays, already leads people to over-utilize services that are not likely to help or address their needs. The real concerning “overuse” is not of people with chronic conditions who rely on highly effective drugs, but of patients who continuously use, and rely on insurance to pay for, ineffective drugs and treatments.

This bill provides access to our people so that we may stand together and be at our strongest. We ask you to help our community stand. As the Chairman of the Joint Committee on Financial Services, you helped to promote the passing of the ACCESS bill ensuring access contraceptives. Today, we ask you to vote this legislation favorably out of committee in order to expand access to life saving medical care.

Letter to the Legislator

Dear Representative Nguyen,

I am a Tewksbury resident who cares deeply about improving our health care system. Along with my fellow Brandeis University health policy student Abby Kaplan, I strongly believe that for society to stand at its strongest, each member must be at their healthiest. I believe in standing up for vulnerable populations, just as you have fought for survivors of domestic violence, veterans, and seniors as a lawyer and into your legislative career. For these reasons, I support bill S.611/H.966, An Act to promote value based insurance design in the Commonwealth.

Many people with insurance are struggling to afford life-saving health medications, services, and treatments because of copays and deductibles. As cost sharing has increased across Massachusetts, this problem has only escalated. Those who are unable to afford copays and deductibles will neglect treatment, either rationing drugs or forgoing care altogether, leading to disastrous health outcomes. For example, a diabetic unable to afford insulin risks blindness, amputation, and even death. Hospitalizations resulting from such cases are an injustice for the patient and a source of waste in the healthcare system.

Bill S.611/H.966 will set up a panel of experts to evaluate medications, treatments, and services. For those deemed to be high value and cost effective, cost sharing will be eliminated. High value cost effective treatments are those which are proven by evidence to be effective, are not addictive, and come at a lower price than hospitalizations/complications associated with altered adherence, like insulin and Epipens. This bill aims to expand access to care, improve health outcomes, and avoid unnecessary health spending.

Opposition to this bill mainly comes through insurance companies who dislike any sort of mandate being placed on their coverage. There is hesitancy from some to support this bill due to fear of how these companies will respond to it. Insurance companies can be expected to offset their initial increased financial burden by raising premiums. But as this bill works its benefits, and more people are able to maintain a status of good health, medical savings will ultimately translate to reduced monthly premiums.

While this is an issue that impacts all demographic, socioeconomic, and health status groups, I am writing to you today as a college student. My friends and fellow students have suffered from the burden of cost sharing. They have gone without doctor appointments and used less effective

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View the bill (MA legislature website):
S.611: https://malegislature.gov/Bills/191/S611
H.966: https://malegislature.gov/Bills/191/HD1207

Organization or Coalition support:
Health Care for All: https://www.hcfama.org/who-we-are

medications because of copayments. Many of us work multiple jobs to pay for school and groceries. Should we, or anyone, have to decide between groceries and a doctor appointment or a lifesaving medication? This bill is currently assigned to the Joint Committee on Financial Services. Abby and I ask that, as part of your commitment to making healthcare more affordable, you weigh in with committee members and support this bill.

Sincerely,

Monica Aronson & Abby Kaplan

Excerpts from Campaign Journals:

Monica

On meeting with Representative Stanley

Abby and I met with Representative Tom Stanley, representative of Waltham and member of the Committee on Financial Services, at his office in the state house to lobby for the bill. We wanted to meet with Rep. Stanley for three main reasons: (1) He represents Waltham and Brandeis is located in Waltham (2) He is on the committee to which H.966 has been assigned and (3) he has sponsored other health care bills this session.

This meeting differed from our earlier meeting with staffer Cameron Stoker. This was a scheduled meeting and when we walked in, Rep. Stanley and his Legislative Director Mark Phillips greeted us and asked for a picture for social media. We then chatted briefly about school and where we were from before moving into the bill discussion.

Since we were switching off, I took the lead in speaking for this meeting. We introduced the bill, how it works, and the issues it seeks to address. The main difference with this meeting was that it was more of a conversation. Rep. Stanley asked us questions, and we answered them. At a few points, his staffer, who was sitting in the back of the room, contributed as well. When we told him who sponsored the bill, Rep. Stanley responded that he speaks with Rep. Farley-Bouvier often and would ask her about this bill. At one point, he also asked his staffer if he was co-sponsoring the bill, which I took as a sign that he might be interested.

We ended the meeting again with some small talk, discussing what was happening at the state house that day this was the day that the anti-abortion group visited. Overall, I really enjoyed this meeting. It felt very comfortable, probably because it was our second meeting of the day so I already had the feel of lobbying from earlier. Rep. Stanley was also very easy to talk to. I did wish however that I had addressed the opposition. He had mentioned that he would ask Rep. Bouvier about it to get an idea of opposition and unintended consequences. This was probably an opening for us to share what we knew but in the moment we weren't quite sure.

Abby

On attending a hearing

On April 11th, we went to the State House for the Health Care Financing Committee’s public hearing on drug costs and transparency. While not a hearing for our bill, it addressed the same underlying problem, people not being able to afford drugs.

Many different legislators, advocacy groups, and organizations were there. Many stories were told about the effect that the price of drugs have on their lives. Pharmaceutical company representatives came to present their side, which was about how the price increases fund research and development. The testimonies were questioned to varying degrees, with the most amount of questions being asked to the pharmaceutical companies.

The room was overflowing when we got there, so we just barely made it in before they closed the door behind us. Getting there earlier definitely would have helped out with the experience, and also may have landed us some time to mingle with other people who were there and make connections.

Hearing the stories and testimonies back to back certainly cemented the ways in which effective speeches are made. The room had emptied out by the end of the 3 hour hearing and we were in a rush to make the commuter rail back to Brandeis, but it would have been extremely beneficial to make conversation with people who had stayed until the end.

While we did not make any connections face to face with a person, we saw organizations that were passionate about the issue and noted them for potential future networking. Health Care For All is an obvious one, but representatives from GBIO and AARP were also present and have tremendous organizing power.

Update

As of 7/12: There has been no action taken on this bill since it was introduced at the beginning of the session.
Expanding Abortion Access

The Roe Act

Sarah Baran McDonald ’20
Ary Vanetsky ’20

In the landmark case, Roe v. Wade, the Supreme Court of the United States conceded that abortion is a fundamental right and all women deserve the right to a safe, legal abortion. The growing threat posed by the Trump-Pence Administration and the recent appointment of conservative judges to the U.S. Supreme Court threaten to take away this fundamental right. In response to these threats, Massachusetts Senator Harriette Chandler, with the support of many other MA Legislators and groups like Planned Parenthood and NARAL Pro-Choice Massachusetts, has introduced the Roe Act. The Roe Act introduces several revisions to the existing abortion access laws that aim to “improve access to affordable abortion by removing unnecessary, burdensome provisions that delay and deny care”. These revisions replace outdated language, provide additional autonomy and protection to physicians performing these abortions under the law, legalize abortions beyond twenty-four weeks as deemed necessary by medical professionals, include fatal fetal anomalies as a medical reason for late-term abortions, require mothers to sign informed consent forms, eliminate the requirement for minors to acquire parental consent or consent from a judge to receive an abortion, protect confidentiality between the physician and the patient, include abortion under reproductive healthcare coverage, and establish safety net coverage for uninsured women to receive a safe and legal abortion.

The Bill

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

Elevator Speech

Thank you for meeting with us today. Our names are Aryela Vanetsky and Sarah McDonald and we are here today because we can all agree that justice and human rights are a crucial part of our fundamental values as American citizens, and people. As two college women living in our current political climate we are fearful that these basic rights are being threatened and without the preservation of the Roe Act, we are in danger of compromising women’s livelihoods, health and overall well-being. Our current political leaders pose a grave
danger to female reproductive rights, and have made it clear they intend to overturn Roe v. Wade. In order to protect the citizens of Massachusetts from the attack of the white house. We cannot rely on the federal government to protect the rights of women and we must strengthen and expand women's healthcare access to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our communities. The Roe Act (S.1209/H.3320) serves as a protective mechanism to allow for low income and underage women to access comprehensive reproductive care services. The Roe Act will provide comprehensive services to these communities regardless of financial status or age, and would no longer require underage women to get legal consent from a parent or judge. We urge you to hold a hearing on this legislation and continue protecting women like ourselves from ever having to wonder "what if".

■ Excerpts from Storybook

“Trump entered office with a pretty anti-choice agenda and his supreme court choices have made it clear what they intend to do. It’s extremely likely that Roe v. Wade is going to be gutted to the point to where it loses all significance.” – Kate Froehlich, Membership and Organizing Manager, MA NARAL

“This isn't just a women's rights issue. This is a people's rights issue.” – Kara Schamell, Licensed midwife and women's rights advocate

“Even though abortions are legal they don't feel legal because accessing them is so difficult.” – Kara Schamell, Licensed midwife and women's rights advocate

“Underrepresented groups have the hardest time accessing abortions. Minors often have a hard time telling their parents or guardians and may people don't have access to vehicles. Through the abortion support collective I have worked with people who are from wine and Rhode Island and Connecticut, all over the northeast, where they lack abortion clinics, that have been forced to come to Boston for abortions. The biggest barrier we see is with day-of logistical support and money. We have to be prepared on all fronts, including on the state level. We need these written processions. We need the Roe Act.” – Emma O'Brien, A birth doula, member in the Boston Abortion Support Collective

■ Op-Ed

Sarah

Pro-lifers: Where Ignorance is Strength and Fear is Power

Orwell said it best. “War is Peace. Freedom is Slavery. Ignorance is Strength.” A novel about the dangers of an overly powerful government in which thought is not free and ignorance is cherished, 1984 has proven to be a tool utilized by both sides of our increasingly bipartisan government. A tool that the pro-life coalition has utilized in an effort to sway the masses to fight against the Roe Act, a bill aiming to expand abortion access and protect the Commonwealth from the likely overturning of Roe v. Wade.

The pro-life movement, in particular, has decided to capitalize on these fears as a means to support their cause, calling the new language in the recently introduced bill S.1209, commonly known as The Roe Act, “Abortion Speech”. The arguments made by the pro-life community are often laughed off and seen as ignorant attempts to sway a population lacking education on the bill, whereas pro-choice supporters attempt to educate and inform. However, where the pro-choice coalition seems to be failing is their insistence on honesty. The pro-lifers are onto something – ignorance is strength and fear mongering seems to be the way to go.

Infamous serial killer, Charles Manson, said so himself: fear is power.

Abortion is currently defined as “the knowing destruction of the life of an unborn child” and pregnancy as “the condition of a mother carrying an unborn child”. The Roe Act aims to replace archaic language surrounding abortion laws in Massachusetts and expand access for women seeking these services, defining abortion as “any medical treatment needed to induce the termination of a clinical, diagnosable pregnancy” and pregnancy as “the presence of an implanted human embryo or fetus within a person's uterus”. According to the Catholic Church and other pro-life supporters, this change in language is representative of “abortion-speech” and likens this to the Orwellian dystopia described in 1984. This change in speech is, apparently, a tool for the evil and manipulative pro-choice supporters to trick the unknowing public into accepting abortion. Subsequently, we should all be scared of the pro-choice manipulation tactics as we enter the dystopian era of thought police.

As ridiculous as this sounds, the pro-life movement deserves some credit – and I’m happy to give it where it’s due. Comparing the changing definition of abortion to something more scientific to 1984 is a smart move. A very smart move, in fact. Fear seems to be key in our current political climate. Don't hate the player, hate the game.

Sarcasm aside, finding a way to combat the false information relayed by the pro-life community is a pressing issue. How do we compete with lies and fear? Truthfully, I’m not so sure. Should we stoop to a level synonymous with the fear perpetuated by our adversaries?

Absolutely not. Our greatest strength is honesty and truth. The Roe Act introduces several revisions to the existing abortion access laws that aim to “improve access to affordable abortion by removing unnecessary, burdensome provisions
that delay and deny care”. These revisions replace outdated language, provide additional autonomy and protection to physicians performing these abortions under the law, legalize abortions beyond twenty-four weeks as deemed necessary by medical professionals, include fatal fetal anomalies as a medical reason for late-term abortions, require mothers to sign informed consent forms, eliminate the requirement for minors to acquire parental consent or consent from a judge to receive an abortion, protect confidentiality between the physician and the patient, include abortion under reproductive healthcare coverage, and establish safety net coverage for uninsured women to receive a safe and legal abortion. The ability to be an autonomous human being is an inherent and constitutional right in the United States, a right that the Commonwealth needs to protect. We can only hope the facts are enough to sway the public, and that, through widespread education of our bill and our message, we can gain support for a cause so necessary to our freedom and our body’s. Support the Roe Act through educating your peers, through hard facts and honesty, through contacting your senator and urging them to support the bill. And hopefully, the truth will prevail.

**Ary**

**How does it feel?**

The morning after makes you feel insecure and fearful of what you should do next. You are filled with embarrassment and question how to go about the rest of your day. Unfortunately for you, there are two options and the latter is surrounded with guilt. There’s no way to escape it, you finally decide it is time for you to face your fear. The journey to the bathroom fills you with anxiety, your stomach knots, and you can’t decide whether your sickness is attributed to morning sickness everyone always talks about, or your mental sickness. After 10 minutes of waiting, a plus sign appears to be looking up at you indicating you have a huge decision to make. You don’t know whether to break down and cry, or burst from happiness. Questions and concerns fill your head with doubt.

Where do we go from here?

Not only are you not in a financially stable place, but you’re already struggling in school and you do not know how to even begin providing for another life, much less your own. That night was the night that changed everything for you, and you can only think about the quality of life you and your unborn child would have at sixteen years of age. You have been raised to think that sex is unholy, you have been taught that pregnancy is shameful, and you do not know what your options are as a young girl raised in an out-of-sight-out-of-mind household.

The reality is, this scenario is not uncommon or unlikely for many sixteen year-old women, nor is it uncommon for any woman of any age or walk of life. It is true that most do not have the financial stability to support themselves or a child, however the conversation about abortion goes beyond that. In some instances, women arrived at this scenario as a result of sexual assault and rape. Too often we are quick to look at the word “abortion” and jump to ominous conclusions about what it means and how women feel or don’t feel about the life of the fetus growing inside them, but it couldn’t be farther from the truth.

In 2016, roughly 2,000 adolescent women between the ages of fifteen and nineteen years old were giving birth and of that, the abortion rate was approximately 9%. Although these statistics do not appear to shock us at first, it is concerning that we as a state have not allowed women adequate access to reproductive health care services, and we force members of our commonwealth to look beyond the scope of abortion being an optioning fear of embarrassment and ridicule to look for other alternatives. Additionally we know that “Massachusetts has one of the most restrictive parental consent laws in New England” making our scenario almost impossible to avoid without parents getting involved somehow. Not only have young women attested to “mandatory parental consent interfering” with patients relationships with health care professionals, but it keeps the healthcare provider from “deciding what is best” for the patient. This is the best case should the young girl even be within radius of a women’s healthcare clinic. In many instances, women are forced to travel for miles out of state just to consult with a healthcare professional about their options.

We are ignoring women’s rights and interfering with their livelihoods. This is not a political issue, it is a personal issue that bridges the gap between justice and equality. The Roe act serves and a mechanism to allow for women of all ages to access the necessary health coverage needed to sustain a healthy and happy life. If we continue to ignore how our current political climate is posing a huge threat to women across the country and the globe, we are not doing our job as citizens to protect people under the constitution. Ultimately everyone benefits from a woman’s right to choose what is best for her and her unborn child. The Act serves to “keep people safe, respect and support the private medical decisions of all people” and in order for us to continue building a sustainable and healthy commonwealth.

If you are someone that wants to continue to foster healthcare services and access to adequate healthcare for every gender and race, take it upon yourself to support the Roe Act. A plus doesn’t always indicate just a sign on a pregnancy test. It could be a huge step forward for everyone in our state.

**House Ways & Means Script:**

273,539 children entered the foster care system in 2016. Over
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687,000 children spent time in foster care. According to the NCA (National Council for Adoption), it costs approximately $25,000/year for each child in foster care. A modest estimate of the annual cost is over $15 billion. While 55% of babies under one year old are adopted through foster care, most children enter the system at the age of seven. The likelihood of adoption decreases with age, resulting in many children spending their entire adolescent lives in the foster care system. A child entering foster care at the age of seven and remaining there until legal adulthood, 18, costs approximately $275,000.

What does any of this information have to do with abortion access? An early term abortion procedure or pill can cost a woman anywhere between $0-$900, the average price being between $300 and $600. Several private health insurances cover first trimester abortions completely. However, without insurance these costs are typically required up front and in full. 75% of abortion patients identifying as poor or low income, approximately 60% of abortions are obtained by women in their twenties, 59% of abortions are obtained by women with children. And 49% of abortion patients live below the federal poverty level. While Massachusetts has historically been a leader in decreasing poverty and expanding health care access, 10.5% of citizens still reside under the poverty line and 5.3% of citizens lack health insurance.

The Roe Act aims to expand abortion access to low income communities, both with and without health insurance, through widespread MassHealth and safety net coverage. While MassHealth typically covers abortions, two major programs: MassHealth Limited and MassHealth Prenatal do not have abortion coverage. Additionally, undocumented individuals residing in Massachusetts cannot be covered under MassHealth, their only options being out-of-pocket pay or safety-net coverage. That being said, safety net coverage is not currently available in Massachusetts for abortions. The expansion of abortion coverage through the Roe Act under all Massachusetts programs and safety net coverage would provide a large population with abortion access. Since the majority of women seeking abortions are poor/low income, this coverage has the ability to be life changing, and fiscally opportune. As discussed earlier, one child living in foster care from the age of 7 to 18 (11 years) costs upwards of $275,000, while an early term abortion process costs less than $900 on average. Several women are forced to give birth to unwanted children. Many children go into foster care because their parents are unwilling or unable to care for them. Expanding abortion access and coverage saves the mother and the child from this pain and tumultuous livelihood and the government from spending millions.

The legalization and coverage of late-term abortions is likely to be a primary argument against the Roe Act, late term abortions often costing anywhere between $17,000 and $30,000.

However, fewer than 1.3% of abortions take place after 21 weeks. With such a small population seeking late term abortions, cost is expected to be minimal. We hope you take everything we have presented you into consideration and we urge you to please keep this information in mind as you vote this bill out of the Ways & Means Committee. The Roe Act presents the opportunity to expand and protect constitutional rights for women and decrease overall spending in the long-term for the state.

Letter to the Legislator

Dear Senator:

My name is Sarah McDonald and I am a student at Brandeis University. As a women who resides in your district, I want to express my support on behalf of S.1209 and why I feel it is incredibly important for our state to continue pushing this legislation forward. Justice, human rights, and autonomy are crucial parts of our fundamental values as American citizens, and as people. As a woman living in our current political climate, I am fearful that resources related to women’s health, particularly regarding abortion access, are being threatened. I feel that it is my right as a woman and as an autonomous human being to do with my body what I choose and it is imperative these values are protected.

The Roe Act will ensure that all women have access to proper reproductive care, including low income women and minors. It will also continue to uphold the strength of current healthcare resources and services that are available to Massachusetts residents. Being a college student that has been faced with many unpredictable situations has made me consider why having this protective legislation is crucial to my livelihood and well-being. If and when Roe v. Wade is overturned, this inherent human right, my right as a citizen of the United States and resident of Massachusetts, could be jeopardized. My fear is that women would be forced to take dangerous measures to maintain control of their own bodies. The Roe Act will be the protective mechanism necessary to protect women like myself and women all over the Commonwealth from the current presidential administration’s unapologetic disregard for female reproductive rights. I urge you to pledge your support to this bill and urge your fellow senate and house members to hold a hearing for this legislation. Thank you for your time, I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Sarah McDonald and Ary Vanetsky
Excerpts from Campaign Journals

Sarah

On Meeting Senator Chandler
Ary and I met Senator Chandler during our first State House visit. Truthfully, this was the interview I was most nervous about, given her status in the MA legislature and lengthy and successful career. She was running a bit late, so we were the last group to start our interview. I think both Ary and I were a bit nervous in the beginning, so the interview started off a little rocky. However, as the interview continued we both became more comfortable and had an amazing conversation with the Senator, discussing the Roe Act and several different reproductive and educational issues. This interview differed from others we had. In my opinion, we developed a more personal relationship, discussing our home lives and states of origin in depth. After our conversation, Senator Chandler offered us both internships at the State House for the summer. I was shocked and elated to receive this offer, especially from such an established woman of the state senate. Overall, our interview went very well. Most importantly, I think I learned how important it is to come prepared and educated on the topic of discussion. I felt a little unprepared, as it was early in the semester and I didn’t know quite as much about the Roe Act. Coming prepared with questions increases my confidence and ability to act professionally.

Ary

On meeting with Senator Comerford
Our meeting with Senator Comerford took place outside of one of the senate rooms in the state house. Senator Comerford was very excited to hear about our opinions and thoughts on the Roe act. Her insights were very knowledgeable, and she had a lot of things to say about the support she has of the bill. The importance she felt was necessary to express on behalf of the success of the Roe act. Sarah and I were both very lucky to have had the opportunity to speak with her as she was very insightful. Her personal experience in the Senate has led her to be particularly passionate about women’s rights and legislation surrounding this. In addition, she was very helpful to us in providing us with video footage, and offering ways in which students like us can begin to reach out to their local government agencies and advocate on behalf of the bill. Her experience in the public health office has also given her the ability to work next to Senator Harriette Chandler, which she mentioned was one of the most eye-opening and motivating experiences for her thus far during her time in the Massachusetts state house.

Update
Update as of 7/12: A Joint Hearing was held for the bill on June 17th. The hearing, as reported by WBUR, was an “emotionally charged debate” with droves of supporters and protesters in attendance. There has been no action reported since the hearing.

For more information

View the bill (MA legislature website):
S.1209: https://malegislature.gov/Bills/191/S1209
H.3320: https://malegislature.gov/Bills/191/H3320

Organization or Coalition support:
There is a current gap in Massachusetts Legislation that leaves employees without recourse when faced with abusive workplace environments and disincentives proactive actions that employers can take to prevent these situations. Without being addressed, workplace abuse and bullying can lead to physical, mental and financial harm to employees and can negatively affect productivity and morale in the workplace. The Healthy Workplace Bill will protect the more than 1 million workers in Massachusetts who experience workplace bullying during their working lives and prevent future abusive workplace environments from forming.

**The Bill**

S.1072: An Act addressing workplace bullying, mobbing and harassment, without regard to protected class status

**Elevator Speech**

Hello, my name is Noaem Shurin, and my name is Madeline Bisgyer, and we are students at Brandeis University who are soon going to be entering the workforce here in Massachusetts. It is important that workplaces here give us and all workers opportunities to succeed and take our careers further.

Currently however, 1 in 4 Massachusetts workers experiences bullying on the job. Bullying and harassment by managers, coworkers, and clients leads to lasting mental and physical harm. It can jeopardize employment and the possibility of promotion and it makes for a workplace lacking in productivity and morale.

The Healthy Workplace Bill (S.1072) would give all workers recourse if bullied on the job, regardless of protected class status, filling a hole in current Massachusetts law. Additionally, it would encourage employers to implement preventative measures and improve workplace environments, ultimately increasing performance and efficiency.

The author of this bill, Dr. Yamada, has dedicated his life to studying workplace bullying and has crafted sound legislation that has already passed through the Labor and Workplace Development Committee in previous sessions. We are asking that you please hold a hearing on the Healthy Workplace Bill immediately and that you vote it out favorably, so that it can continue through the process, be put to a vote, and improve the lives of thousands of Massachusetts residents who are bullied at work.
Thank you for taking the time to speak with us. Do you have any questions?

Excerpts from Storybook

“My husband got hired as a contractor specialist. His first week, several new co-workers told him that he had a target on his back from the young woman that was the assistant at the desk. During training, she would give him the wrong information, pull items out of orders, sabotage his paperwork and lie to management. When HR would not help him by investigating, he quit. Many employees either quit or were fired because of that woman, and somehow she was never punished. Even for situations that aren’t as blatant, passive-aggressive treatment and being overlooked for promotions, there are so many ways that people suffer at work, and what choice do we have?” – Marie, advocate and community organizer

“I experienced bullying when I was young, never did I think I could experience it as an adult. I was HR Manager at a small manufacturing company. I came back from lunch one day and was asked to come to a conference room. Two attorneys were at the table and they attacked with questions and accusations. The scheme was to intimidate us into leaving. Access to my work computer was blocked, rumors were started and the atmosphere was heavy and ripe from confrontation. I was right back to that 9th grade girl, panicking and fearful. I went to my doctor and applied for family medical leave. I was out of work, suffering with PTSD and panic. I didn’t leave the house for months. I had no legal recourse. They weren’t attacking me because I was a woman, they did this to me because they could. I still live with PTSD symptoms and panic. I always will. This bill is so important to me because it is me. I want to continue raising my voice so not one more person has to be a target. It’s way passed time.” – Kim, senior sales support

Op-Ed

Madeline

Workplace Bullying: Harassment You Didn’t Hear About During #MeToo

We are fed up with harassment. The women of #MeToo have made that clear. But the story doesn’t end there. The Massachusetts Healthy Workplace Bill is carrying on the momentum of #MeToo to show that harassment, whether sexual or not, is not acceptable within any workplace setting.

Harassment in the workplace goes far beyond sexual harassment, or harassment due to discrimination. Many people expect their jobs to be degrading, authoritative struggles. Yet, in healthy workplaces bosses aren’t the bad guys and coworkers look out for each other. All it takes is a few brave voices speaking out to help people realize they no longer need to put up with bullying and harassment on the job.

Until recently, many women put up with uncomfortable situations, inappropriate relationships, and harassment. They were told by mentors, family, and colleagues that it is “just part of the job”. In order to succeed as a woman in film, politics, the office, you have to shut your mouth and do your best to survive. The same is true of folks in HR, homecare, and food service.

The Healthy Workplace Bill which has been proposed in thirty states including Massachusetts would change what is acceptable in the workplace. It would reach beyond the famous and the rich, giving everyday workers a voice. Workers would have recourse other than seeking intoxicants or mental health services when things got tough.

Workplace bullying, which can include verbal abuse, threats, intimidation, humiliation, or work interference, is experienced by 1 in 4 Massachusetts workers over their lifetime. Bullying is degrading to workers identities and self-confidence, as well as their physical health. Far too often, it leads people to suffer from depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, or suicidal thoughts.

Employers are not doing enough to prevent this type of behavior. The Healthy Workplace bill would give workers recourse if bullied on the job, regardless of protected class status, filling a hole in current Massachusetts law. And ultimately, it would encourage employers to implement preventative measures and improve workplace environments before problems occur.

This would not only benefit workers, but employers too. The bill provides provisions that protect employers from frivolous lawsuits and recognizes the value in a productive, efficient workplace. Work environments with bullying and harassment lead to high absenteeism, turnover, and attrition. All of these things cost businesses. With the passage of this bill, employers would have an opportunity to address these inefficiencies.

An inefficiency can be as simple as decreased productivity due to a disruptive colleague, or in more severe cases illegal actions being kept quiet due to fear and intimidation. Marcy*, a Walmart employee, was asked to falsify temperature logs for department refrigerators. When she declined, her manager went out of his way to make her uncomfortable and humiliate her in front of other employees. She was bullied. Marcy lost 25 pounds in six months and experienced severe mental health problems. [*Name has been changed.]

Under current Massachusetts law there is nothing she can do to address this problem besides quit her job and take the consequences. But if people speak up we can change that. Call your legislators and ask them to support the Healthy
Workplace Bill. This is their chance and our chance to be on the right side of history because #MeToo is nowhere near over.

Noaem

“Healthy Workplace Bill: Taking us Back to the Basics”

We’ve all heard the phrases, “if you don’t have something nice to say don’t say it at all”, “always say ‘please’ and ‘thank you’”, and “treat others the way you want to be treated”. From kindergarten to grade school we’ve learned that treating each other with respect, assuming each other’s best intentions, and in disagreements, engaging with the best forms of each other’s arguments.

Instances of workplace bullying and harassment are on the rise. You read that correctly. Grown adults are currently bullying other grown adults in their very adult workplaces, so much so, that one in every four workers in Massachusetts will experience some form of workplace bullying. When I first heard that statistic, I was shocked. It is deeply concerning that adults have forgotten the basic principles of interacting any kindergartener could instinctively recite if asked. Then I took a step back, and realized adults haven’t forgotten these norms, they’ve been retaught other more harmful ones.

Recently, there’s been a shift in discourse. Politicians, the people who we trust to shape the laws and norms of our society, have forgotten the crucial knowledge we learned in kindergarten. Specifically, the name calling and slandering we’ve been seeing during the current election cycle. People are becoming more concerned with how politicians are dressed than with what their policies are.

Congress, the Supreme Court, and the Executive office are all workplaces. The way we talk about politicians, the ways they talk about each other and their policies, are the government equivalent of workplace interactions. I would never expect to be shamed for dancing in college or wearing makeup in a workplace setting. My private life is of no concern to my employer because it has no impact on the way I do my job. This happens in Congress all the time.

What’s worse is that in a normal workplace I would have an HR department to settle bullying disputes, but when part of the expectations of your job are public harassment and humiliation, there’s no way to challenge things when they go too far. By condoning, and even praising this sort of behavior, we normalize it and can’t be surprised when we see it in our workforce.

This is why bills like the Healthy Workplace Bill, that target the work environment, are so crucial. The Healthy Workplace Bill would expand worker’s rights by providing a clear definition of workplace bullying and expanding legal protections for both employees and employers. Employees would be able to sue for instances of workplace bullying that aren’t on the basis of protected class (ie race, gender, religious creed). This is necessary because there’s a lexical gap in our legal system that allows people to bully others because of their socioeconomic status, their region of origin, their style choices, or any other number of silly reasons to berate another human being. Simultaneously, it assuages fears of wrongful accusations by allowing employers to defend their actions if they provide evidence they were necessary to running the company. So, firing someone because they were negligent would not be considered an instance of workplace bullying.

Most importantly though, it creates “vicarious liability” which means that an employer can be held liable for harm to an employee even if the harm was not directly caused by the employer. For example, if the employer creates a culture where bullying is acceptable, they can be held liable for negligence. This is crucial because the way to reshape the work environment is to reshape employer incentives. If this bill passes, employers would be incentivized to take preventative measures in order to curtail workplace bullying. This could look like making boardroom meetings more inclusive to employees, rebuking bullying immediately when it becomes apparent, and expanding their HR departments by making people do more comprehensive, government regulated, discrimination training.

It is very difficult to change the work environment on the federal level, but putting laws in place that change it on the individual level would discourage people from emulating the behavior they see normalized at the federal level. The Healthy Workplace Bill is a way to directly target the norms seeping into the workplace as a result of these harmful trends. Not addressing these issues now would mean knowingly letting another year of graduating seniors like myself will have to enter the workforce without the legal protections they need. If you want to be a part of changing the work environment for the better call your legislators and tell them to vote S. 1072 out favorably. If we all take the time to support the bill (and maybe email a few of our kindergarten teachers to get a refresher course) future graduating classes could enter the workforce at ease.

House Ways & Means Script:

The Ways and Means committee which values fiscal responsibility, understandably, spends taxpayer money if and only if the outcomes benefit those taxpayers or society as a whole. Workplace bullying will affect one in every four workers, and causes absenteeism, stress related health risks, and could increase unemployment. Passing the Healthy Workplace Bill, would not only achieve the ends of reducing overall instances of workplace bullying, but will do so at a relatively low cost to the commonwealth and will reduce instances of financial waste in both the public and private sector.
S.1072 establishes two legal precedents: vicarious liability and affirmative defense. Vicarious liability establishes that an employer can be held liable for harm to an employee even if the harm causing act or acts was not directly perpetrated by the employer. This links the action of the bully to the employer who allowed them to commit those actions in the first place. This creates an incentive for employers to hold people who are committing bullying accountable. At the same time, this empowers employees who face workplace bullying to come forward. Vicarious liability allows employers to target workplace bullying more quickly and efficiently, reducing overall instances in the long term.

Affirmative defense would protect employers by giving them the opportunity to present evidence that the actions they took were necessary to workplace operation or that they were not aware that any bullying occurred. Ending bullying starts with employers. They hold the power to change behavior in ways that employees on equal levels do not. This part of the bill means that employers can target instances of workplace bullying without fear of being accused of unfair treatment themselves. When employers have incentives to end workplace bullying, plus protection through being able to defend themselves, incentives to protect bullies in these instances are eliminated.

The current problem is that there are few incentives to report workplace bullying and the terminology around bullying is vague. It is difficult for employees to sue in the status quo because workplace bullying is difficult to define, so employers can find ways of saying the workplace bullying was just company procedure. S.1072 would give a more concrete definition for what workplace bullying is, making it easier to target because both employers and employers would more easily be able to identify it. Even when instances of workplace bullying can be identified, there are few incentives to pursue legal actions as employers want to maintain the company’s reputation and employees may fear losing their jobs. Legal precedent, such as vicarious liability would mean employers could be held liable for not directly targeting workplace bullying, and would incentivize employers to take actions towards preventing it in the first place.

Reducing instances of workplace bullying reduces financial waste in four ways. First, Bullying is associated with higher healthcare costs. People facing workplace bullying tend to rely more heavily on mental and physical health resources such as therapy or specialized medical visits, which come at a cost to the employer. Secondly, lawsuits based on preventable stress in the workplace put employers who protect bullies in legal jeopardy. Drawn out legal cases present a significant cost to institutions in MA, and if the suits occur within the local government, could present a cost to the taxpayers as well. Thirdly, there’s higher turnover as employers need to replace the workers that either quit because they have no other option, or because they cannot be present at work due to the severity of the bullying. Interviewing, vetting and rehiring people takes time and money unnecessarily from businesses and reduces efficiency. Lastly, and most importantly, workplace bullying stifles work ethic and creativity. Problem solving, product creation and innovation all slow down as a result. Even one of these costs should be significant to the committee because when the MA private sector does poorly, it impacts tax revenue that could be used to fund other government endeavors.

The committee should pursue this bill because the cost is small, compared to the potential benefits. Massachusetts would see some costs associated with the passage of the Healthy Workplace Bill. The state would have to create an office to receive and process reports of workplace bullying. The office would most likely have 1-2 staffers and would use similar structures and procedures as current state offices that process discrimination and sexual harassment cases. Relying on models of similar offices, this new office would be established easily and with relatively little cost. Another cost of this bill is the investment in preemptive and preventive programs to improve work environments for state workers. Private employers are encouraged by the bill to implement policies and programs to create good work environments. The state, as an employer, would have to do the same. There are a number of affordable private companies and consultants that the commonwealth could hire to do this. Lastly, if harassment and bullying cases are filed against the commonwealth, state funds would need to be paid in settlement fees. The minor cost of this preventative measure is far outweighed by the costs associated with not passing this measure, and letting the issue of workplace bullying fester.

Given the cost to businesses and the subsequent cost to the state, we urge the committee to hold a vote and move forward favorably S.1072.

Letter to the Legislator

Dear Senator Michael J Barrett,

My name is Madeline Bisgyer. My friend Noaem Shurin and I live in Waltham and we have been very happy to see that you support both Bills S.1042: An Act regulating the use of credit reports by employers, and S.986: An Act protecting the long-term unemployed from discrimination. We value your decision to support legislation that gives workers the opportunities that they need to succeed and find jobs.

However, currently 27% of Massachusetts workers will experience workplace bullying during their working lives. The stress workers experience as a result of this bullying makes deep and lasting impacts. Workplace harassment by managers, coworkers, and clients leads to depression, hypertension, and posttraumatic stress disorder. It can
jeopardize employment and the possibility of promotion and it makes for a workplace lacking in productivity and morale.

The Healthy Workplace Bill (S.1072) would give workers recourse if bullied on the job. Currently workers are protected from bullying based on protected class status (race, gender, age, etc.), but there is a gap in current Massachusetts law for bullying not based on protected class status. S.1072 would close that gap. Additionally, it would encourage employers to implement preventative measures and improve workplace environments, ultimately increasing performance and efficiency.

We are writing to ask you to co-sponsor S.1072: An Act addressing workplace bullying, mobbing and harassment, without regard to protected class status. This bill is the logical next step in supporting workers who benefit from the Equal Credit Opportunity Act and other bills that address employment discrimination. These bills, that you support, are only successful if they help Massachusetts residents enter safe and healthy workplaces.

Noaem and I are young people preparing for our first jobs out of college. We hope to stay in Massachusetts, however, we are concerned about our wellbeing. Many of our friends have already experienced bullying and harassment in introductory and internship positions. Please co-sponsor the Healthy Workplace Bill and demonstrate to us that you value our futures and what we bring to the community here in Waltham and in Massachusetts.

Please reach out with any further questions.

Thank you,

Madeline Bisgyer and Noaem Shurin

Excerpts from Campaign Journals

Madeline

Meeting with Rep. Paul Brodeur’s staffer, Patrick

Representative Paul Brodeur is chair of the House Committee on Labor and Workforce Development. ... Noaem and I scheduled a meeting with Patrick one of the Representative’s staffers. This visit stood out to me for a few reasons. Firstly, Patrick was very good at his job. He listened to what we had to say and quickly responded with questions. One of the biggest takeaways for me from this class has been how much legislators rely on everyday people and organizations for information. This staffer told us exactly what information he wanted us to find for him and asked some questions that we had not yet considered. Looking back, I would have challenged his ideas more than I did, however I still learned a lot from the experience.

The second thing that happened was unexpected and really eye opening. Patrick asked Noaem and me if we would like to stay in the room while some of the people lobbying against the Roe Act and the Sex Education Bill came to speak with him. We were able to see how he used the same strategies he used speaking with us, on a group of people who he didn’t agree with. At some points he even had the women reconsidering their stances on the bill. This was a great opportunity to see how lobbying works from both sides.

Noaem

On meeting with Professor Carol Osler

All the way at the beginning of the semester I had a meeting with Professor Carol Osler who works in the economics department at Brandeis. She put out an extensive research paper on workplace bullying and its economic effects. I actually cited her work in the research paper we had to submit earlier in the year. We met in her office after class, it was a one-on-one meeting where the plan was just to discuss her paper. I love Professor Osler, so I welcome any chance to talk to her about anything. We ended up talking for around an hour about her personal thoughts on workplace bullying, the culture... [at] Brandeis ... and her thoughts on the bill itself. What surprised me was that she didn’t want to put her name on the bill because in her opinion it didn’t go far enough. She thought the bill didn’t penalize employers heavily enough and created loopholes that most people would easily be able to get around. Hearing her say this made me feel relieved as I had felt this way about the bill because in her opinion it didn’t go far enough. She thought the bill didn’t penalize employers heavily enough and created loopholes that most people would easily be able to get around. Hearing her say this made me feel relieved as I had felt this way about the bill as well and thought I was in the minority. We then had a conversation about whether just getting something out would be better than letting the problem sit. She thinks people will become complacent and we’ll be right back where we started if we just agree to pass anything. I disagree, and it was nice to get that perspective, so I would be forced to defend my position. She also shared with me her work on intent, and why including intent to bully as part of anti-bullying legislation is ultimately harmful. Her willingness to share and help me get a more well-rounded understanding of the problem was both helpful and kind.

Update

As of 7/12: A Joint Hearing was held on June 25th, there was a lack of reporting by Massachusetts media.

For more information

View the bill (MA legislature website):
S.1072: https://malegislature.gov/Bills/191/S1072

Organization or Coalition support:
http://www.mahealthyworkplace.com/index.html
Ensuring Language Readiness for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children

Helping parents of deaf and hard of hearing children assess their child’s needs before kindergarten.

Gabriel Brainson ’19
Rachel Lederer ’19

In Massachusetts, many deaf and hard-of-hearing (DHH) children arrive in kindergarten with far less exposure to and understanding of language than their peers. This occurs as a direct result of language deprivation in these children between the ages of zero and five. An Act to ensure language readiness in deaf and hard of hearing children entering kindergarten seeks to remedy this by requiring the Department of Education (DOE), in conjunction with the Department of Public Health (DPH), to select language developmental milestones for DHH children, and to create resources detailing them that are easily accessible to parents. These resources will assist parents with monitoring the language development of their child from birth to age five, whether they are choosing to teach them spoken English, ASL or both. In addition, the DOE and DPH will provide resources to educators relative to how to assess language and literacy development in DHH children, both in spoken English and ASL. A task force on kindergarten readiness will be established to assist with developing resources described above.

■ The Bill
S.305/H.3550: An Act to ensure language readiness in deaf and hard of hearing children entering kindergarten

■ Elevator Speech
Hello! Our names are Rachel Lederer and Gabriel Brainson. We’ve come to you today as constituents who care deeply about ensuring equal opportunity for all of Massachusetts’ children, regardless of background. We know that early education is critical and has lifelong consequences for a child. We also believe that language is a human right, a tool that one cannot navigate our world without, and that all children should have access to it.

Massachusetts’ deaf and hard of hearing children are being left behind. 59-75% test in the warning or failing categories on statewide tests each year. This disparity is directly traceable to language deprivation that many deaf children face before they reach kindergarten. Over 90% of deaf children are born to hearing parents, who have to make decisions about how to communicate with their child. Because of a lack of education and resources, parents often struggle with doing this, and as a result,
many deaf children reach kindergarten with little to no intact language. Of these children, the majority who are being left behind are those of lower socioeconomic status, minority, and immigrant families.

S.305, An Act ensuring language readiness in deaf and hard of hearing children entering kindergarten, is part of a national campaign to ensure access to language and language acquisition for all of America’s children. It establishes a volunteer task-force which will compile language acquisition milestones for deaf children, whether the language of instruction be American Sign Language, English, or both. These resources will be readily available to both parents and educators and help guide them as they work together to make important choices and ensure language acquisition for their child.

We believe this is an urgent issue which needs to be addressed as soon as possible. Will you support this bill, call for a hearing soon, and vote it out fast and favorably?

Op-Ed

Gabriel

“Equal Access to Education Exists: Fact or Fiction?”

Every child born in the United States is supposed to be screened at birth for hearing loss. According to the National Institute of Health, one baby in 1,000 of those screened will turn out to have moderate, severe, or profound hearing loss that, if not promptly and properly treated, can delay their ability to learn verbal and auditory communication skills. In the first five years of a child’s life, the introduction of any language is critical during this phase of cognitive development if we want to prevent permanent language deprivation.

While newborn screening is an attempt to mitigate language deprivation, it is only half the battle. Standardized test scores in Massachusetts place 59-75% of deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) children in the “Failing” and “Needs Improvement” categories across all grade levels. These scores are a direct result of language deprivation, implying that we aren’t doing enough for these children. 90% of DHH children are born to parents that can hear, parents who are commonly unaware as to the types of immediate services their child needs. Based on the above test scores, schools in Massachusetts are also clearly ill-equipped to monitor and prevent language deprivation—thereby, setting these children up to fail.

This makes me, a 22-year old Deaf student, very angry. As a country, we believe everyone is entitled to an education regardless of race, religion or creed. As such, shouldn’t every child receive an equal chance at a quality education regardless of any disability? The answer: yes they should, and the Act to Ensure Language Readiness in Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children Entering Kindergarten, will do just that.

A part of the national LEAD-K coalition (Language Equality and Acquisition for Deaf Kids), this bill will establish a task force whose sole mission will be to monitor and further prevent language deprivation in the Commonwealth. The task force will create a list of developmental milestones to assist schools and parents in the early detection of language deprivation. The task force will also provide readily accessible documentation and recommendations on resources that parents can seek for their child to assist in acquiring language skills. By educating teachers on language development milestones and educating parents on available language development services, we will be able to ensure that children who are deaf or hard of hearing have access to language and are kindergarten-ready when they start school.

When a child is diagnosed with a hearing loss, their parents must make a choice about how they want their child to learn to communicate—spoken language, American Sign Language (ASL), or both. While LEAD-K advocates for ASL communication, touting its proven success in DHH children, they emphasize the importance of acquiring any language—ASL or other. So, because of LEAD-K’s national stance on ASL, there is a concern that this bill does a disservice to DHH children and families by favoring ASL and restricting this parental choice.

However, having read the bill, the language is clear. The writers of this bill see the importance of informed parental choice, they see the importance of having options. The bill does not prefer one method of communication over another, instead it supports equal access to effective communication for all. This bill provides options for children to help them communicate. It offers options for parents to help them make informed choices about what is best for their child and their family.

If we’re serious about equality in our country and in the Commonwealth, the issue of language deprivation needs to be rectified immediately. The goal of government is to provide everyone with equal opportunity and equal access to success, and this bill will go a long way to ensuring the provision of equal opportunity. So please, contact your local representatives and tell them you need their support on this bill. Tell them the children need their support on this bill. Together, we can put a stop to language deprivation once and for all.

Rachel

If you’ve ever taken an introductory psychology class, you might have heard of Genie. She was a girl who was found in 1970 to have been severely abused and socially isolated by her father, and [as a result] developed effectively no language by the age of 13. Cases like this are of interest to psychologists and linguists because they are seen as very rare occurrences—happening maybe a couple of documented times in a century.
The truth is that for deaf and hard of hearing children in the United States and Massachusetts today, the occurrence rate is much higher. This devastating disparity cannot be overlooked or normalized. Deaf children have all the same capacities for learning as hearing children. All that they need is full access to language from an early age to develop their linguistic and cognitive abilities like any other child.

One reason that deaf children are being left behind is that over ninety percent of deaf children are born to hearing parents.

Children who are born into deaf families who already use American Sign Language, or ASL, to communicate, are exposed to signs from birth in the same way that hearing children are exposed to speech. Research has shown that linguistic development in these children mirrors development patterns in most hearing children, and prepares children for written English literacy in a similar fashion.

However, for deaf children who are born into hearing families, the situation is different. Many of these parents might not have ever known a deaf person before. They don’t know how to communicate with their child, and suggestions from doctors and therapists are often conflicting.

Many hearing parents pursue technologies such as hearing aids and cochlear implants in efforts to allow their children to hear and process language in that way. Others make efforts to learn sign language and teach this to their children.

The problem of language deprivation exists independent of language type. There are deaf children who are taught very limited spoken language; there are deaf children who are taught very limited signed language.

A national campaign called LEAD-K, or Language Equality and Acquisition in Deaf Kids, is aiming to pass state-level legislation which combats the problem of language deprivation in deaf kids across the country.

A new bill entitled “An act ensuring language readiness in deaf and hard-of-hearing children entering kindergarten” has recently been introduced in the Massachusetts legislature. This bill is a part of national LEAD-K efforts. Its effects would be to establish a task force to make recommendations on language developmental milestones to parents and educators, to better track deaf children’s linguistic development before they reach kindergarten. The milestones would be available for both ASL and spoken English, and parents would be able to choose which language to teach their children.

Arriving in kindergarten without fully formed language has devastating effects on long-term cognitive development. By the time a child reaches age 5, over ninety percent of their brain has already developed, and the foundations for future learning have already been set.

Some who are opposed to the bill argue that ASL is not a viable language to teach deaf children, and that giving parents the option to choose this path is detrimental to a child.

The truth is that for some children, ASL is the only option. For some, cochlear implants are a medical impossibility, and outcomes after implementation are variable. ASL is a fully formed language with a rich cultural tradition, complete with grammar, vocabulary, and syntax independent from English. It is a natural language for deaf children to learn; it facilitates their growth and development in ways that spoken language does for hearing children.

Additionally, for those who receive cochlear implants, the procedure is usually not done until after the tenth month of a baby’s life. The introduction of ASL during the period prior to implantation would facilitate natural language development. Without it, children would be left without language for up to the first year of their life, or more. Eliminating ASL as an option entirely would leave some children entirely without language.

Deaf children deserve language, and this bill ensures that parents and educators will be better informed and able to help facilitate that process, regardless of what language is used. It ensures basic civil rights to deaf children and allows them to think, communicate, grow, and thrive. Please contact your elected representatives and ask them to support S.305 and H.3550.

House Ways & Means Script

Members of the Committee: Can we agree that all children, regardless of background, deserve equal opportunity and access to a quality education? The most important years for education and language development are during the first 5 years of a child’s life. Once a child reaches age 5, 90% of their brain has already been developed—marking these years as crucial for a child’s future educational success. This early childhood education sets the foundation for a child’s success in life by building early language and communication skills, just like it did for you and me.

In Massachusetts, many deaf and hard-of-hearing (DHH) children arrive in kindergarten at age 5 with far less exposure to and understanding of language than their hearing peers. Roughly 59-75% of these children have tested in the categories of “warning/failing” or “needs improvement” on statewide assessment tests. This comes as a direct result of language deprivation in these children during their early childhood years.

Language, in any form, is imperative to navigating school, jobs and the world at large, a basic human right that we are denying our deaf and hard of hearing children. The language deprivation that these children experience is a result of the lack of information their parents have available to them on how to best facilitate their child’s language acquisition.
90% of deaf or hard of hearing children born in the United States every year are born to hearing parents. Imagine that, being a new parent with a deaf or hard of hearing child and not knowing what informed decisions to make on how best to raise your child and how to teach them a skill that should come naturally—communication.

This bill will mitigate the issue of language deprivation by establishing a volunteer task force of experts that will work on recommending specific language learning milestones for deaf and hard of hearing children learning American Sign Language, spoken English, or both. These guidelines will provide a structured way in which parents and educators can monitor the growth of the child, compile the data, and ensure that the child is learning communication and language skills in a productive and timely fashion. These milestones will inform parents of the progress of their child and the task force will provide the parents with informed options regarding ASL and/or English acquisition and potential steps for their child to acquire either or both.

It is important to note that this bill does not discriminate against which language the child will learn and the choice is solely up to the parents—something the opposition has failed to recognize. Both sides agree and want timely language acquisition; the argument comes down to which language these children should acquire. The resources available will be balanced in nature and will allow families to make the personal choices that are right for their child and will enable them to learn and thrive. It is also of note that these resources are made publicly available, so that families of all children, regardless of socioeconomic background, can access information which will allow them to most effectively advocate for their child in special education meetings.

The proposed volunteer task force will be made up of respective experts in the ASL, English, D/deaf and hard of hearing communities. Because it is volunteer-led, the fiscal implications of this task force will be minimal. Regarding the task force, there is one item of note that might incur expenses, and that would be the provision of an interpreter at these task force meetings, should the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing not be able to provide one at no cost. Looking past the task force, there is a potential expense in providing training and guidance for early childhood educators on how best to carry out their jobs using these new developmental milestones established by the task force. Unfortunately, we have no numbers to provide regarding this cost as the LEAD-K bills in other states are too new and have not collected enough data at this time.

In the short term, while this bill would require small expenditures by the Commonwealth the value and importance of stopping language deprivation means that it would be in our best interest to push this bill forward as fast as possible and vote it out favorably.

Long-term, it is in all of our best interests to ensure that deaf and hard of hearing children are able to develop language and participate fully in school and later in their personal and working lives. We are confident that this bill will unlock the potential of these children and would lead to them making meaningful contributions in the Massachusetts and United States economies as language-capable adults. The positive effects of timely language acquisition are significant and long-lasting, both on a personal and societal level. So, please vote this out fast and favorably. Thank you!

**Letter to the Legislator**

**Dear Senator Feeney,**

We are writing to you today as constituents who care deeply about ensuring equal opportunity for all of Massachusetts’ children, regardless of background. We know that early education is critical and has lifelong consequences for a child. We also believe that language is a human right, a tool that one cannot navigate our world without, and that all children should have access to it. This issue is deeply personal for us, as one of us is deaf.

We are concerned that Massachusetts’ D/deaf and hard of hearing children are being left behind. 59-75% test in the warning or failing categories on statewide tests each year. This disparity is directly traceable to language deprivation that many deaf children face before they reach kindergarten. Over 90% of D/deaf children are born to hearing parents, who have to make decisions about how to communicate with their child. Because of a lack of education and resources, parents often struggle with doing this, and as a result, too many of these children reach kindergarten with little to no intact language. Of these children, the majority who are being left behind are those of lower socioeconomic status, minority, and immigrant families.

S.305, An Act ensuring language readiness in deaf and hard-of-hearing children entering kindergarten, is part of a national campaign, entitled LEAD-K, to ensure access to language acquisition for all of America’s D/deaf children. The bill would establish a volunteer task-force which will compile language acquisition milestones for D/deaf children, whether the language of instruction be American Sign Language, English, or both. These resources will be readily available to both parents and educators and help guide them as they work together to ensure language acquisition for their child. This would come at little cost and great gain.

Some of those opposed to this bill believe that it privileges one form of communication over the other; the truth is that it does not. Parental choice as to whether they will teach their child ASL, English, or both is clearly highlighted throughout the bill. The task force created would represent a variety of perspectives on ASL and English instruction for D/
deaf children and ensure that the most pertinent information is made easily accessible. While there are a variety of medical, social, and other factors affecting choice of language, everyone can agree that it is cruel to deny language to a child, and this bill ensures that it will not happen.

We believe this is an urgent issue which needs to be addressed as soon as possible. The livelihood of thousands of D/deaf children today and in the years to come is at stake. We therefore ask you to support this bill, call for a hearing soon, and encourage your colleagues to vote it out fast and favorably.

Sincerely,
Rachel Lederer
Gabriel Brainson

Excerpts from Campaign Journals

Gabriel

On meeting with Cathy Cogen, Coalition leader for Massachusetts LEAD-K

The meeting was a video conference between Rachel Lederer, myself and Cathy Cogen, one of the coalition leaders on the Massachusetts LEAD-K team. This meeting was to reflect on our earlier visit with Senator Lesser and discuss the intricacies of the bill. We spoke about Cathy’s connection to the Deaf community and why she is interested in the issue of language deprivation. We talked about our own interests in the subject and discussed the debate surrounding the bill as a whole—who supports it, who does not, and why. This discussion was constructive in understanding the current political climate surrounding the issue of preventing language deprivation in Deaf children.

Rachel and I were also able to ask Cathy many questions regarding the specifics of the bill such as its history in other states, the opposition in other states, the budgetary concerns, and we even asked what more we could do outside of the classroom to assist with the advocacy efforts. I think this meeting went really well, we were able to glean a ton of information that in turn helped us further advocate for the bill. The main thing I learned from this meeting is that the most essential thing in the field of lobbying or advocacy is constant contact. Always send emails, call and follow up consistently. Always make sure someone will remember you favorably, and just be personable and make connections with everyone you talk to.

On meeting with Representative Tyler

This meeting took place on March 6th at 1pm in the Massachusetts State House. Those in attendance were myself, Rachel Lederer, Representative Tyler and his aide, Ryan Dominquez. The purpose of the meeting was research-based, as Rachel and I were tasked by Cathy and the [LEAD-K] coalition to figure out how much those on the House Education Committee knew about the bill.

We sat down with Rep. Tyler and his aide and we started asking them questions about the bill. We asked if they had heard of the bill, what they knew about the larger issue of language deprivation and what their thoughts on the bill were. Rachel and I filled in any information that they were missing or didn’t know and in the process, we were able to figure out that Rep. Tyler and his Aide could be possible supporters of the bill when the time came. Ryan Dominquez, the aide, told us of his Deaf aunt and told us how much things like this mean to him and his family. It was clear that Rep. Tyler knew of this, and was equally understanding as to the benefits this bill would present, should it be passed.

This was our first meeting with a legislator who didn’t know about the bill previously and I think it went really well. I felt very nervous at first, but again, once I started having a conversation, things got much easier from there.

Rachel

On Meeting with a legislative aide

I spoke with Christian Kelly, a legislative aide of Senator Adam Hinds, in his office. I introduced the bill to him, and right away, he recognized it and asked whether it was the LEAD-K bill. He said that Senator Hinds had heard concerns about the bill from ENT doctors, but would not definitively say whether the senator was opposed to or supportive of the bill. I explained to him that the bill emphasized parental choice of which language to teach their child, and he said he knew and that the problem the doctors had was with the presence of choice.

This was interesting to me because organizations like the American Speech and Hearing Association (ASHA) had put out statements saying that they oppose versions of the bill that privilege ASL as a choice over spoken language, but to my knowledge, none of the bills that were part of the national campaign actually stated that ASL would be preferential to teach deaf children – all of them advocate for parental choice. The Massachusetts bill creates a task force which is explicitly balanced between experts in/advocates of spoken language and ASL early education. It was sad to hear that presenting ASL as even an option had received pushback like that.

I told him that I would send him more information and he gave me his business card. I am planning on sending him our advocacy video to better explain the bill. Because of this meeting, we explicitly included more language in the video concerning how this bill does not impose ASL on any family or child, and explaining why it is of crucial importance to give parents and educators all the information and support to teach deaf children in acquiring language.
Update

As of August 11: A joint hearing was held on July 23rd, and can be viewed in its entirety using this link: https://malegislature.gov/Events/Hearings/Detail/3223.

For more information

View the bill (MA legislature website):
S.305: https://malegislature.gov/Bills/191/S305
H.3350:https://malegislature.gov/Bills/191/H3350

Organization or Coalition support:
LEAD-K: https://www.deaffocus.org/lead-k
Reforming the Juvenile Justice System

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

Zosia Busé ’20
Gabriel Sol Fontes ’19

S.825/H.3420: An Act to promote public safety and better outcomes for young adults, colloquially referred to as “Raise the Age,” intervenes by gradually shifting the age of juvenile jurisdiction to include 18, 19 and 20-year-old offenders. This intervention will give young adults the opportunity for developmentally appropriate rehabilitation. Under the jurisdiction of the Department of Youth Services (DYS), emerging adult offenders will have the opportunity to receive counseling and academic and vocational training in a safe and developmentally appropriate environment.

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

■ Elevator Speech
My name is Zosia Busé, and my name is Gabriel Fontes. We are students at Brandeis University, passionate about fundamental fairness and opportunity for Massachusetts youth, and we are advocating on behalf of S.825/H.3420, An Act to Reduce Recidivism and Better Outcomes for Young Adults. According to Massachusetts law, you must be 21 years of age before you can try your first sip of alcohol, rent a hotel room, or rent a car. Yet, at the same time, if you are caught for a nonviolent offense such as vandalism or disorderly conduct, at just 18 years old, you will be tried in adult court and could be sent to an adult prison. We can agree that youth are society’s most vulnerable population and our most valued asset. It is our duty as a society protect them. Our current Justice System is failing young adults. Adult prison is a traumatic environment for the developing brain of emerging adults and can have long term physical, emotional and mental effects. The brain continues to develop into the mid-20s. This renders 19 and 20-year olds more likely to benefit from positive and therapeutic environments but also more vulnerable. Emerging adults have the highest recidivism rates of any age group which means our current system is neither rehabilitating these young adults nor protecting the communities they go back to. In addition, the mismanagement of young adult delinquents disproportionately places an economic burden on those already struggling neighborhoods, specifically communities of color. For instance, Residents of Dorchester and Roxbury made up 47 % of those committed to the Nashua Street Jail and Suffolk County House of Corrections in 2013, and the state directed nearly $34.5 million locking up these residents instead of directing funds to schools, civic life, or health. The juvenile justice system objectively works much better

Gabriel Sol Fontes and Zosia Busé
than adult system. Sending young adults to DYS facilities will provide them with education, mental health services, counseling and other programming that are developmentally appropriate. Since the 2013 legislation to raise the age from 17 to 18, recidivism has for 18-year-old offenders has decreased by 34%. Overall, S.825/H.3420 will young adults will have the ability to rehabilitate, increasing their chances of reintegrating positively back into society. This legislation isn't soft on crime, it's smart on crime. We urge you to schedule a hearing to move this bill forward and vote this favorably.

■ Excerpts from Storybook

“I am 18 and I can't smoke, drink or even gamble, but I am supposed to be able to handle prison?” – member of Dorchester Bay Youth Force

“Because the brain continues to develop into the mid-20s, young adults are more susceptible to change. This renders 19 and 20 year olds more likely to benefit from positive and therapeutic environments but also more vulnerable to harm from criminal socialization in an adult prison environment.” – Stephanie Tabashneck, Psy.D., J.D.

■ Op-Ed

Zosia

Developmentally Tailored Justice

Adolescence is often a tumultuous time for emerging adults making the difficult leap to the real world. Teenage culture is one of exploration, risk-taking, rebellion, and making mistakes. With raging hormones, teenagers often find themselves sneaking out their bedroom windows to see their friends, skipping school, and exploring the party scene. Everyone can relate, we've all made a bad decision or two. However, the worst that usually happens is being grounded for a few weeks. Yet, this is not the case for everyone. April and May are the months that every high-school senior looks forward to. Planning for prom, senior week, and graduation parties is the top-priority. These celebrations of the last days before entering adulthood often include quite a bit of partying and mischief. Yet, one wrong move could ruin everything, as many of these kids have already turned 18. If they get caught drinking, smoking, or otherwise misbehaving, at just 18 years old, they will be tried in adult court and could be sent to an adult prison.

Science strongly supports the claim that the emerging adult brain does not fully develop until around the mid to late 20s. According to Deborah Todd-Yurgelun, PhD, of Harvard University’s McLean Hospital Cognitive Neuroimaging and Neuropsychology Laboratory, adolescent brains process information differently than adult brains, and these brain differences explain teen traits such as impulsivity, poor judgment and social anxiety. Because brain development is still in flux, teenagers are more likely to make mistakes. Should these mistakes follow them for the rest of their lives? However, the juvenile brain is more likely to benefit from positive and therapeutic environments but are also more vulnerable to toxic environments. Adult prison is a traumatic environment for the developing brain of emerging adults and can have long term physical, emotional and mental effects. Their vulnerability causes long term mental health issues, such as PTSD, criminal socialization, and most troubling, recidivism. Emerging adults have the highest recidivism rates of any age group which means our current system is neither rehabilitating these young adults nor protecting the communities they go back to. 76% of justice-involved young adults return to prison within three years. Moreover, the mismanagement of young adult delinquents disproportionately places an economic burden on neighborhoods and communities of color. For instance, Residents of Dorchester and Roxbury made up 47% of those committed to the Nashua Street Jail and Suffolk County House of Corrections in 2013, and the state directed nearly $34.5 million locking up these residents instead of directing funds to schools, civic life, or health. The juvenile justice system objectively works much better than adult system in that it provides necessary resources for rehabilitation and reintegration into society. The problem is clear: emerging adults are being unfairly treated via being processed through the adult system. But what is the solution?

Representatives Kay Kahn and James Day, along with their Senate counterpart, Joseph Boncore, have presented the “Raise the Age” bill, S.825 and H.3420, to the Massachusetts legislature. S.825 and H.3420, if passed, would raise the age of juvenile jurisdiction, gradually to the age of 21. This would also emerging adults to be processed in juvenile courts and, if convicted, would be sent to facilities run by the Department of Youth Services. The juvenile justice system objectively works much better than adult system. Sending young adults to DYS facilities provides them with education, mental health services, counseling and other programming that are developmentally appropriate. This solution works. In 2013, the legislature passed an iteration of this bill raised the age from 17 to 18. Since then, recidivism for 18-year-old offenders has decreased by 34%. Moreover, almost 90% of 18 year old offenders, upon release, voluntarily enroll themselves in therapeutic resources through DYS, to include employment services and job training, which they are eligible for until they turn 22. Raise the Age will young adults will have the ability to rehabilitate, increasing their chances of reintegrating positively back into society. Numerous studies and research have concluded that the brain is still developing, and emerging adults should be treated with this consideration in mind.

Zosia Busé is a student at Brandeis University studying Social Policy and Conflict
Dear Representative Michlewitz,

We are students at Brandeis University in Waltham MA, asking for the support of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means of bill S.825/H.3420 An Act to promote public safety and better outcomes for young adults.

We believe in fundamental fairness and opportunity for emerging adults, aged 18 to 20 years old. Young people, like ourselves, who commit nonviolent offenses deserve the opportunity to rehabilitate, get a good job, and become productive members of society. Unfortunately, the way we currently deal with emerging adults is not working. Emerging adults make up 10% of the state population but represent more than 25% of arrests and 23% of House of Correction commitments (Tabashneck, 2018). Emerging adults have the highest recidivism rate of any age group. In 2011, 76% of emerging adults released from prison were brought back to court within three years, (Citizens for Juvenile Justice).

High recidivism rates are harmful to justice-involved young adults and dangerous for our communities. The solution is to pass S.825, colloquially referred to as the “Raise the Age” bill, which will gradually raise the age of juvenile jurisdiction from 18 to 21 years old. If passed, Bill S.825 will reduce recidivism rates. Emerging adults will have the opportunity to rehabilitate in a developmentally appropriate environment under the care of the Department of Youth Services. Emerging adults will receive education, vocational training and mental health services. When Massachusetts raised the age of juvenile jurisdiction from 17 to 18 years old in 2013, we saw a 34% decline in juvenile crime, far performing national averages.

Leading evidence from neuroscientists and psychologists show that the human brain is still developing until the mid-20s. Until that age, the prefrontal cortex, which controls impulse control and decision-making skills is not fully formed. In contrast, the limbic system which responds to short term rewards or negative emotions is overly sensitive. Furthermore, emerging adults are more responsive to peer pressure than older people. Therefore, emerging adults are particularly susceptible to the traumatic environment and criminal socialization found in adult prisons. Young adults in prison are more likely to be assaulted and have higher rates of suicide.

Now that you have been apprised of the moral and safety benefits of this bill, you may be asking “at what cost?”

The short answer is not as much as you think. MassINC, in their research report on Justice Reinvestment, reaffirmed that it is extremely expensive to keep someone in adult prison (MassInc 2018). Some estimates indicate costs can rise to over $80,000 a year per prisoner, (MassInc 2018). In 2013, opponents warned that raising the age would cost taxpayers almost $25 million. Instead, the juvenile justice department received an increase of just $15.6 million (MassBudget.org).

A 2015 report by DYS confirmed, “Costly construction and staffing changes in the adult facilities were not needed in Massachusetts because of the shift of youth under 18 to the juvenile system.” (DYS Annual Report, 2015).

While there will be an increase in up-front costs, the long-term benefits of reduced recidivism rates will save the state money. According to Dr. David Mitchell, Director of the Bureau of Economic Research at Missouri State University, “there is a greater reliance and stress on rehabilitative services in the juvenile system versus the adult system, [so] the initial per-person per-year costs might be slightly higher,” (Mitchell, 2017). However, Fiscal benefits must be evaluated in the long-term. As Dr. Mitchell posited in his research, a convict processed by the juvenile system has a different role in the economy post-release (2017). When provided with mental health services, educational opportunities, and vocational training, emerging adults are more employable and more likely to contribute to the Massachusetts economy (Tabashneck, 2018).

Raising the age will protect emerging adults from the traumatic consequences of adult prisons and ultimately keep our communities safer. Though we will incur higher up-front costs, we will see long-term benefits. Our question for you Chairman Michlewitz is: “Is investing in our youth and communities worth it?”

Thank you for your time.

Zosia and Gabriel

Excerpts from Campaign Journal

Zosia

On phone call with Stephanie Tabashneck, Juvenile Justice Specialist

In my opinion, this was one of the most successful connections we made this semester. Stephanie was one of the resources that I found for our legislative report. I found her website, reached out via a listed email, and she jumped right into action and has helped us in a variety of ways. This conversation began with a conversation regarding her work as well as her research on Raise the Age. She explained that she has a Juris Doctorate, but also a Ph.D. in Forensic Psychology. Her current work is through the juvenile court system, and her work focuses on Child Custody Category E (“G.A.L.”) Evaluations, Psychological Evaluations, Substance Use Evaluations, Parole, Competency to Stand Trial, and Criminal Responsibility, and Risk Assessments. She was a particularly special resource as she could speak on circumstances and logistics within DYS and the Juvenile court, but also was able to discuss her research on juvenile psychology and the
emerging adult brain. She spoke in depth about prisonization and criminal socialization. However instead of emphasizing the lack of impulse control and other arguments people make about the emerging adult brain, she emphasized the unique ability for the emerging adult brain to be positively impacted by rehabilitative resources. Her testimonies were very helpful for my and Gabriel’s work throughout the semester, as she was able to hit on all of the relevant topics as well as provide arguments against the counter-arguments. As this conversation was so early in the semester, I was unsure about where all of the information she gave to us would fit in. We realized later on in the semester that the brain development research was THE argument. That is what everyone both supporting and opposing the bill are focused on. It would have been beneficial to reach out to more neuroscience and psychology specialists if we had realized this earlier in the semester.

Update
As of August 11: There has been no action taken on the bill.

For more information
View the bill (MA legislature website):
S.825: https://malegislature.gov/Bills/191/S825
H.3420: https://malegislature.gov/Bills/191/H3420

Organization or Coalition support:
M ore than two-thirds of Massachusetts electricity generation is still powered by unsustainable, polluting natural gas fuels. An additional one-sixth of electricity is generated from nuclear power. In comparison to the one-eighth coming from renewable energy, these amounts are far too high (U.S. EIA). Given the significant advancements the state has made towards solar energy technology and production in the past decade, a clean energy reform is possible. In a future with continued and intensified climate change, we risk increasingly unpredictable events such as coastal flooding, wildfires, drought, and extreme temperatures – to name a few. These extreme conditions have detrimental effects on the economy, public health, infrastructure, coastal resources, energy demand, natural resources, water resources, and recreation.

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

■ Elevator Speech
Hi, my name is Ian Quin and this is Anna Dorosenkov. We are here today to express genuine concern for the future of the Commonwealth. Climate change is becoming a more pressing issue every day. It is a critical time for Massachusetts to commit to responsibly planning for the future because every existing social, health, and political issue is exasperated as fundamental necessities such as clean air and water are endangered.

In a future with continued and intensified climate change, we risk increasingly unpredictable events such as coastal flooding, wildfires, drought, and extreme temperatures – to name a few. These extreme conditions have potentially detrimental effects on the economy, public health, and water resources. Currently, approximately 50% of the state’s energy is still derived from natural gas. Continuing the use of dirty energy sources is both unwise and unsustainable, given its extreme implications on our society, and world, at large.

This bill has recently entered the Committee for Telecommunications, Utilities, and Energy. We ask for your full support in getting it approved and subsequently passed. Voice your support for this bill and
in doing so, you will have voiced your support for a bright, clean future.

The bill to transition Massachusetts to 100 percent renewable energy, S.1958, introduces a necessary framework to set the state on the right track for a sustainable future and improve economic welfare. The bill aims to create jobs in the growing clean energy market, increase energy efficiency, affordability, and reliability, and begin developing clean energy infrastructure.

**Excerpts from Storybook**

“What I’m doing just isn’t enough. We in our society today in the US are not doing anything close to what we need to be doing. It’s the political will that we need to muster to change things.” – Senator Marc R. Pacheco

“This is a big undertaking but should have been established a long time ago because now we are behind on achieving the required goals to avoid a more catastrophic climate change scenario. Ambitious policy is needed in order to reach 100% renewable energy.” – Sabine Von Mering, 350 Mass Advocate and Director of German and European Studies at Brandeis University

**Op-Ed**

**Anna**

Solving the climate crisis is not contingent on whether people believe the science or not, it is contingent on political will. Historically, energy reform has been led primarily by entrepreneurship and the private sector, but legislative efforts are slowly catching up to non-governmental agencies. According to the Yale Climate Opinion Maps for 2018, 62% of adults in Massachusetts believe that global warming is mostly caused by human activity and 69% believe their governor should do more to address this issue.

Environmentally favorable changes, such as transitioning to renewable energy state wide, are inevitably dependent on governmental action. Beyond environmental benefits, providing Massachusetts consumers with a diverse energy system consisting of zero carbon energy sources eliminates the inconsistent price fluctuation that is intrinsic to natural gas services. The natural gas market is extremely vulnerable to supply instability and therefore prices spike during periods of shortage.

To keep the state in line with the framework set in the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2008, an increase in Massachusetts renewable energy portfolio (RPS) is needed. A comprehensive bill titled An Act transitioning Massachusetts to 100% renewable energy, S.1958/H.2836, sets guidelines by which the state can achieve 100% renewable electricity and subsequently 100% renewable energy across all sectors by 2035 and 2045 respectively. It aims to build a green economy through increasing energy efficiency, affordability, and reliability. It also takes into account disproportionately affected communities and fossil fuel work displacement. The passing of such legislature could be monumental in mandating a shift to a clean energy economy. Such an economy will create thousands of local jobs and provide consumers with more energy choices. A report by Applied Economics Clinic (AEC) predicts that implementing policies that will increase the state’s RPS, expand offshore wind energy production and storage, and allow more flexibility with net metering, will be advantageous for the economy of Massachusetts. The report predicts an annual increase of $263 million in economic growth from 2018 until 2030.

One concern that some legislators share has to do with the gravity of statutorily requiring 100% renewables by a specified date because of the possibility of failing to meet those given requirements. Consequently, there is fear in passing such a high stakes act. Senator Michael Barrett loosely equates the passing of this bill to him telling his wife he’s going on a diet. Although it is true that the passing of this bill itself will not solve the climate change problem or even guarantee a clear grid, goal setting is an integral first step. Implementation, however, is the real driver of change. If Massachusetts wants to stay true to its national image as a leader in combating climate change, renewable energy policy implementation is a necessary move.

This bill will declare Massachusetts as one with California and Hawaii, leaders in the fight for a clean energy future. As a state that prides itself on being at the forefront of progressive movements, it will naturally prioritize steps needed to take in order to meet the agenda outlined in the bill. The prospect of Massachusetts being a hero in fighting climate change is also an enticing reason for bold action.

Massachusetts is especially vulnerable to the impacts of sea level rise and is one of the states that is already experiencing climate change first hand through inland flooding, coastal flooding, extreme temperatures, and other weather related events. Between the years 2007 and 2014, Massachusetts spent over $9.1 million in flood repairs annually.

Legislators should hold themselves morally responsible for getting ambitious legislature passed in the same way that all of us should feel morally responsible for advocating the need for such legislature. “The path is there, if only our leaders will choose to take it” - Amory B. Lovins. To make sure this bill gets passed, speak to your legislators and advocate for this bill to be voted out favorably from the joint committee on telecommunications, utilities, and energy.
I’m a firm believer in a certain motto Abraham Lincoln coined, to paraphrase: the government must do for people what the people cannot do for themselves. Just on the level of denial that exists in our country today, it’s safe to say that climate change presents one of the greatest threats to our civilization. It’s strikingly clear that there’s greater need for climate change prevention and adaptation. While it may not be what the public wants, it’s what’s needed. The Massachusetts state legislature should create, pursue, and pass most, if not all, legislation related to climate change prevention/adaptation in the coming session so that the commonwealth is safe, regardless of their lack of knowledge on climate change. But the only real way for this to happen comes back to you. Contrary to the beliefs of some, the government cannot read our minds, we must speak out and talk to our elected officials and representatives about this pressing issue and convince them to act on it.

House Ways & Means Script

Thank you for taking the time to be here today and for listening to what younger generations around the world, and most importantly, here in Boston have to say regarding their future.

S. 1958, or, An Act transitioning Massachusetts to 100 percent renewable energy promises to be a revolutionizing bill for this state’s future energy infrastructure. Not only that, it’ll help minimize damages associated with extreme climate related events occurring at a recently increasing rate. It’s been estimated that storm damages alone over the next half-century could exceed well over $5 billion. Beyond the financial need, the bill will help ensure the current and future safety of the commonwealth, something that is not quantifiable with a dollar sign.

This bill’s function is plain and simple: figure out where renewable energy can and should be implemented is and lay down the framework in government agencies to start the transition. Due to the nature of the bill, as it merely influences other sections of the Massachusetts Government to switch towards renewable energy, the cost of this bill remains relatively low and does not require too much of a financial investment to achieve its goals. It does, however, necessitate funds for research and establishing councils to be used as a physical will for this act.

Beyond the upfront costs, this act promises the initiation of a major energy revolution in this state. The costs for that transition will not be cheap, and that should be no secret. But overtime, renewable energy has proven to be more cost effective than our current fossil fuel standards.

At the current rate of production, renewable energy has provided a 2.3% increase in the Mass GDP and has created over $11.4 billion in economic activity. Only .7% of all the
energy consumed in Mass comes from renewably sourced production. Imagine if we were to reach this bill's goal and completely switch over to renewables.

Increasing economic activity is not the only outcome from this bill. Long-term energy expenditures will go down as our reliance on fossil fuel importation dwindles. Last year, Massachusetts spent over $1.7 billion on interstate pipeline imports alone. This was out of the $21.5 billion energy expenditure costs. 100% renewable energy means that any expenses will be as a result of the upkeep necessary for the continued operation of renewable energy infrastructure. The initial investment for creating this infrastructure will be manageable if the appropriate steps are taken to nurture it. It’s market growth, and in the long run, the investment will be paid back by decreased spending on fossil fuel imports climate change related damages.

This act, itself, does not guarantee these changes. It simply sets the stage for it all to happen. S.1958 is not just legislative jargon, it’s the first real step towards a better future. While this step, along with many more after it, require action and funding, it does not need an abundant amount of finances to be carried out. If anything, we are getting ahead of the curve so that we may accurately predict what this will cost us later on down the line. With that, we can begin properly saving and allocating funds now.

We ask that you approve this bill and allow it to go to the floor of the senate on the basis that it provides a sound financial return on a minimal amount investment while allowing for increased efficiency and effectiveness of our energy infrastructure.

Thank you for your time.

Letter to the Legislator

Dear Representative Stanley,

As students within a large network of Massachusetts residents voicing our concern for the greatest threat to humanity, we write to you with a genuine concern for the Commonwealth and its people. With climate change becoming a more pressing issue every day, it is a critical time for bold leadership and decision making. Every citizen is entitled to a safe future, a future that you can help provide. For younger generations in Massachusetts, climate change threatens the promise of a happy life, something everyone should be entitled to, especially if people have the power to make it happen.

As you know, climate change is a direct threat to the state in several ways including increased rates of coastal flooding, wildfires, drought, spreading tropical diseases, and extreme temperatures. Given the improved renewable energy technologies of our century, it would be remiss if we were not to take full advantage of these, and in the same way it’s equally dangerous to still be heavily reliant on polluting fossil fuels. Currently, approximately 50% of the state’s energy is still derived from natural gas. Continuing the use of dirty energy sources is both unwise and unconstitutional, given its extreme implications on our society.

You are one of the strongest leaders representing a state whose residents are in agreement on the need for responsible planning to combat climate change. We value your efforts to include Waltham in the “Green Community” program. However, state-wide use of nonrenewable energy undermines this progress. We turn to you for action on An Act transitioning Massachusetts to 100% renewable energy (S.1958/H.2836). The passing of this bill will put Massachusetts in the forefront along with California and Hawaii, set the state on the right track for a sustainable future, and improve economic welfare. While other pieces of legislation exist to combat climate change, this is one needed simply due to its specificity when addressing how we will actually remove fossil fuels from our lives. We strongly believe that the state could lead the way to a healthier and safer future with local, renewable, affordable and reliable energy through a cutting-edge clean energy economy.

We can understand that changing out entire energy infrastructure seems like a costly and possibly unwarranted action, but this is just not the case. The bill seeks to make a gradual shift from fossil fuels to renewables over the course of decades, which would allow the state to properly organize and fund the transition. This would also reduce the upfront costs of making the change and maximize returns in the future, especially if we come up with the best renewable energy infrastructure in the country, something this state is entirely capable of doing.

We are earnest in our request for your inspired leadership and urge you to vote favorably for this bill. We also ask that you convince your colleagues on Beacon Hill that this bill should pass through the UET Committee and make it to the floor for debate.

Sincerely,

Anna Dorosenkov and Ian Quin
Brandeis University

Excerpts from Campaign Journals:

Anna

On attending the Boston Youth Climate Strike

This was for me one of the most memorable climate related events I attended. It was extremely powerful being in a crowd of other like-minded youth advocating at the State House. There were lots of great signs, and some bad ones like, “Kiss my activist a**” and “Save the Earth, Go Vegan”, that I thought were not so helpful. Overall there was good
energy and it was organized. After rallying outside for about an hour, we headed inside for a panel with Nika C. Elugardo, Representative Mike Connolly, Representative Tami L. Gouveia, and finally Senator Marc R. Pacheco. The two young women hosting asked questions relating to how youth can best demand action and encourage the more stubborn legislators to support policies. The panel left me feeling like even these legislators are frustrated with the state of things and the lack of urgency from other state officials. A few activists expressed how it is largely up to the reps and senators on the panel to convince other officials to get on board with climate policies.

On meeting with Jacob, Senator Barrett’s aide

This was the first one on one meeting we had at the State House and although we were hoping to meet with the Senator, Jacob gave us some important insight into some of the logistics around this bill. He was very knowledgeable on renewable energy and the bill we were advocating for. He was also honest and gave us his personal opinions, plus he shared with us how the Senate and House differ in the way they do things. We found out that the House is more slow in getting things done, which makes sense considering they are a larger group, but they also tend to be more careful. This informed some of the following conversations we had with people from the House side.

Ian

On meeting with Senator Mark Pacheco

The same day that the Climate Youth Rally/Strike was occurring at the Statehouse, a secondary presentation was made in the hearing room. Multiple senators and reps were speaking to the protestors and activist present at the rally. Among them was Senator Mark Pacheco who agreed to speak briefly with myself and Anna. The meeting was rather happenstance but it proved to be one of the more impactful talks we had the pleasure of experiencing. We took the time to ask the senator about his view on the lack of inaction and failure to combat climate change within the Commonwealth. We also asked if he could provide insight on his experience with our bill and the challenges he’s facing while supporting it. He outlined the main hindrance to climate action as the lack of advocacy and support among the general population and his constituents. The senator continued by explaining that the senate would often refuse to pass legislation or continue to support legislation if it didn’t have enough public support behind it, which he suspected might be the case for our selected bill. We caught the senator at a rather awkward time as he had just finished another talk with less than cordial activists, this did however provide us with a unique chance to speak with him when he was faced with advocates who’re not pleased with the amount of work being done. In other words, he spoke more frankly.

Update

As of August 11: On July 23rd the bill had a hearing by the Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy committee where a letter signed by 16 experts urged the committee to pass this legislation (the letter can be read here: https://environmentmassachusetts.org/sites/environment/files/resources/July%2023%202019%20letter%20-%20final.pdf). While there is no further action has been taken as of yet in Massachusetts, six states have already passed and committed to similar plans.

For more information

View the bill (MA legislature website):
S.1958: https://malegislature.gov/Bills/191/SD1625
H.2836: https://malegislature.gov/Bills/191/H2836

Organization or Coalition support:
Environment Massachusetts: https://environmentmassachusetts.org
Driver’s Licenses for Undocumented Immigrants

By allowing undocumented residents to apply for a standard Massachusetts driver’s license, the Commonwealth would be promoting safer roads by testing the training of drivers and requiring insurance, stimulating economic growth from immigrants’ increased participation in the workforce as well as increased Registration of Motor Vehicle and revenue, and more effectively utilizing the state’s resources such as policing and costs related to accidents involving uninsured drivers. Several of these effects have been experienced in the 12 states that have already enacted similar legislation.

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

Elevator Speech
My name is Hannah and this is Jacqie, and we are students at Brandeis University, and we are also two of the hundreds of thousands of drivers that take to the roads of Massachusetts every day. As a society, we take incredible measures to ensure the safety of those on the road, but there is more that we could do to prevent unsafe road conditions and decrease hit-and-runs in order to protect the residents of this Commonwealth. Undocumented people are unable to apply for licenses, but must use cars in order to work and support their families – they, like most other Massachusetts residents, need to take their kids to school and doctor’s appointments, to buy groceries, and to get to their jobs. It isn’t just about road safety – it’s about the wellbeing of the people of the Commonwealth.

This inability to apply for licenses leads to more untrained drivers on the roads and higher rates of hit-and-run accidents because undocumented residents fear being detained without a license. Bill S.2061/H.3012, An act relative to work and family mobility, if passed, will allow all residents to obtain a standard driver’s license, and the 200,000 undocumented residents in Massachusetts will be able to be trained and licensed drivers; providing more security for all individuals and families residing in the Commonwealth. This could decrease the number of hit-and-runs and lower insurance rates for all MA residents.

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 externalities 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.

**Excerpts from Storybook**

“60% of the people deported from the United States are originally detained on traffic violations. Not having a license is one of the biggest sources of fear in this community; it ruins lives. However, they have to drive, and they are driving — they have jobs to go to and families to support. A license would make the roads safer, and give these immigrants a valid form of identification. Without that, you can’t go to the bank, pick up your child from school, or even go to a hospital without issue,” – Douglas Smith, the Legal Program Director at The Right to Immigration Institute

“Maria* lives in Massachusetts with her two young daughters after fleeing the dangers of their home country. Even though Maria was once an independent, affluent business woman, she struggles to find employment in her community because of a lack of transportation Maria must rely on unreliable public transportation, and as her health declines, it is becoming more difficult for her to get to doctor appointments, the pharmacy, and even the grocery store to support her family. Her children are not immune to the effects of this burden either. When her youngest daughter was injured at school, Maria could not drive her directly to the hospital, and the school was forced to call an ambulance, placing yet another burden on a family that is already fighting to stay afloat. For Maria and her family, the ability to obtain a driver’s license would provide them with the sense of health, financial, and personal security that they came to the United States to find.”

* Maria's name has been changed.

“Robert* is a student at Brandeis University who is a legal citizen in the U.S., but both his mother and his father are undocumented immigrants from Mexico. When Robert was in high school, he applied for and received his driver’s permit, which was his first form of legal ID. One day, his father tried to buy allergy medicine, but was not able to due to a regulation that required the pharmacy to check a legal form of ID before selling the medication to a customer. Because neither his father nor his mother had a legal form of ID to show, they had to return to the pharmacy with their son, who was able to use his driver’s permit as ID to purchase the medicine. Robert recalls being able to ‘sense [his father’s]

hurt of being rejected,’ especially because it was ‘just’ a basic allergy medication.”

* Robert’s name has been changed.

**Op-Ed**

**Hannah**

**Driver’s Licenses for Undocumented Immigrants; Benefit for all**

Your friends. Your neighbors. Your coworkers. These are all people who may be unable to obtain any form of identification. In Massachusetts, residents unable to provide proof of lawful residence are currently not allowed to obtain driver’s licenses. It may be easy to forget how important identification is in your life, but it isn’t for those who don’t have that luxury. You need a license to drive legally – to drive your child to school, to drive to the hospital, and to drive to work – and you need identification to get allergy medication, to enter federal buildings, and to open a bank account. These people who are unable to obtain identification are active members of your community and economy. They are people who have children and families they must support. They are people you see every day. They are people.

Our federal immigration system is broken – and there doesn’t seem to be a comprehensive immigration reform anywhere in sight. Until reform occurs, states are left to decide how to provide for the millions of undocumented immigrants who are a part of their communities and their workforce. In Massachusetts, estimates indicate that over 250,000 undocumented immigrants reside in the state. That’s 250,000 Massachusetts residents who have jobs, who pay taxes, and who have families to support. Many of these residents live in the suburbs, where people must rely on cars to get to work and school. Legislation allowing undocumented immigrants receive driver’s licenses has been passed in a dozen states and the District of Columbia, and now it’s time for Massachusetts to do the same.

Bill S.2061/H.3012, An act relative to work and family mobility, if passed, will allow undocumented residents to apply for and obtain standard driver’s licenses. Allowing undocumented residents the opportunity to obtain a license will not provide them with any additional public benefits, besides simply the ability to become trained, licensed, and insured drivers, and to have a valid form of identification.

The inability to apply for licenses means there are more untrained drivers on the roads and higher rates of hit-and-run accidents because undocumented residents fear being detained or even deported without a license. In California, where they passed a similar bill, likelihood of hit and run accidents decreased by 10%, thereby improving traffic safety and reducing costs for California drivers.
Massachusetts prides itself on providing equal opportunity for all, but fails to do so for these people who live, work, and raise their families in Massachusetts. One in twenty children in the Commonwealth live with at least one adult who is unauthorized to drive. Children's healthy and happy upbringing is dependent on their parent's ability to provide for them, and current law forbids many parents from having the opportunity to fully provide for their children. Massachusetts is failing these families.

Some opponents say that Massachusetts should not make it easier for undocumented immigrants to work jobs they are not supposed to have. But make no mistake – just because many of these people are not licensed to drive, that does not mean that they are not driving. Driving, especially in Massachusetts, is a necessity for most individuals and families. Undocumented people, like all other residents, must use cars in order to work and support their families – they, too, need to take their kids to school and doctor’s appointments, to buy groceries, and to get to their jobs. Instead, however, they are driving in constant fear.

One thing we can all agree on is that Massachusetts roads should be safe for all – but unfortunately Massachusetts does not allow every driver to be tested, licensed, and insured. An Act relative to work and family mobility is the solution Massachusetts needs to allow its residents equal opportunity to driver’s licenses. The passage of this bill would provide more security for all individuals and families residing in the Commonwealth. It would make our communities safer, our economy stronger, and our families healthier. If you agree that children should have to ability to live in households with parents who are given the opportunity to fully provide for them, and want each Massachusetts driver to be licensed, registered, and insured, support S.2061/H.3012. Call or write a letter to your local state legislator today.

Jacqie
Get This Kid to the Hospital

You just went inside to prepare lunch for your children. As you take out the plates, you hear a THUMP and a shout quickly after. Running outside, you see one of your children nursing his ankle while sitting in the grass with another busted-up knee. You swiftly carry your child inside, cleaning him up and trying to tend to wounds. After a few minutes, the tears have mostly subsided as he takes comfort in your care; however, this is also when you realize that a few bandages and ice packs may not be enough to remedy the situation. A trip to the emergency room is going to be necessary, and you gather some belongings: your purse, your child’s favorite blanket, a book for your other child. As you drive to the hospital, there is a pit in your stomach as you fear what your child may have to face – it’s all you can think about. How much more terrified would you be if you had no choice but to drive illegally?

Under the current law in Massachusetts, immigrants living in the state without proper documentation are prohibited from applying for a driver’s license. However, over 200,000 undocumented immigrants currently reside in Massachusetts, contributing to their communities and the Commonwealth at large. They need to be able to support themselves, their families, and their communities by driving without a license, though they face enormous risks, up to deportation, should they be stopped on the way to work or the supermarket. Beyond the roads, disallowance of licenses still bars these residents and their families from accessing fundamental services. Driver’s licenses are basic form of identification. Without a license, many immigrants do not have any means of identification, meaning they do not have any means to open bank accounts, obtain insurance, or even buy prescription medications. Nowadays, identification is even required in order to pick up your kids from school.

One in twenty children in Massachusetts live with at least one undocumented adult (American Immigration Council 2017), and many of these children are United States citizens. These prohibitions affect not only non-licensed adults, but their entire family. They are families who have built lives and planted roots here in Massachusetts, whom you know as your colleagues, neighbors, and friends. However, right now the movement to allow undocumented immigrants to apply for driver’s licenses is stronger than ever, and a proposal for this change is seen in the bill An Act relative to work and family mobility (S.2061/H.3012). As Massachusetts transitions to REAL IDs, federal identification cards that require more proof of identity to acquire, this bill proposes that undocumented people should be eligible to apply for standard Massachusetts licenses. If the bill were to be implemented into law, the main differences between a standard license and a REAL ID would be that a standard license would not require a social security number to apply for, but it would not give the same benefits as a REAL ID, such as the ability to enter federal building or board a domestic flight.

Massachusetts is teetering on the brink of this transition, while other states have already seen tremendous impact by giving licenses to qualified undocumented immigrants. In California, the Immigration Policy Lab found that there was a ten percent decrease in hit-and-run accidents after this bill was passed. These residents are already driving, but when people are licensed, the state can ensure that they are doing so safely, with training and insurance. Relatedly, in Colorado, residents experienced savings of about $30 million in out-of-pocket insurance expenses after this bill became law. With a similar undocumented immigrant population to that of Colorado, it is not unreasonable that Massachusetts residents could see similar savings (Colorado Fiscal Institute 2015). Twelve states across the country have already implemented such laws, and New York and New Jersey are currently in the
process of trying to pass these bills because of the benefits they predict for the future of their own states.

An investment in this movement, in this bill, in these families, is an investment in the future of Massachusetts and all of the residents of the Commonwealth. Over 200,000 people need to go to work, buy groceries, receive their medications, and pick up their children from school. Get in touch with your local representative. Ask them- Are you supporting An Act relative to work and family mobility (S.2061)?

Because a parent shouldn't have to worry about getting their kid to the hospital.

■ House Ways & Means Script

We urge you to push through Bill S.2061/H.3012, An Act relative to work and family mobility, which would allow undocumented residents to apply for and obtain standard Massachusetts driver’s licenses. This bill will make Massachusetts roads safer by ensuring that every driver can become trained, licensed, and insured. This will decrease the number of hit-and-runs, lower insurance rates for all Massachusetts residents, and increase local and state governments’ revenue.

Bill S.2061/H.3012 is by no means radical nor a new concept – it has been proposed several times before in the MA legislature, and similar bills which allow residents to apply for driver’s licenses regardless of immigration status have passed in twelve other states and the District of Columbia. This bill would improve the Commonwealth’s public safety and economy, just as it has in other states such as California, Colorado, and Vermont. Allowing undocumented residents to apply for a Massachusetts standard license will increase the number of registered and insured drivers on the roads, increase state revenue due to the profits gained from these processes, lower residents’ insurance payments, and allow state and local police to use their resources more efficiently within their communities.

According to a Colorado Fiscal Institute study from 2015, the economic benefits of providing licenses to all immigrants far outweigh the administrative costs of the program. Current legal residents of Massachusetts would financially benefit from allowing undocumented people to become licensed drivers, as would the economy of the Commonwealth as a whole. When this law was changed in Colorado, drivers who had already been insured saw savings that ranged up to $29.5 million in insurance premiums each year, and insurance companies saw an annual increase of $113 million increase in revenue. Revenues for state and local governments would also increase by $5.3-$6.9 million due to an increase of residents taking the driver’s test and registering their vehicles with the Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles. With Colorado’s estimated 200,000 undocumented immigrants, as compared to Massachusetts’ 210,000, we can expect to see similar economic benefits in the Commonwealth.

While some may argue that there may be administrative costs associated with a slight uptick in license applicants, the revenue gained from the increase in residents paying into the system will certainly offset these costs, and result in a gross net gain in state and local revenues. This bill should also result in a decrease in average insurance payments due to a decrease in car accidents, given the fact that more less people on the road will be forced to drive without a license, and they will therefore have the opportunity to be trained to drive safely on the road of Massachusetts. Some who oppose this bill suggest that passing it would result in an influx of undocumented immigrants into Massachusetts from surrounding states, but this has not occurred in any of the states where it has been passed, including bordering states such as Vermont and Connecticut. Granting undocumented immigrants driver’s licenses also allows police officers to save time and money, as they would no longer have to allocate resources to detaining and filing ultimately inconsequential paperwork for people who would otherwise simply be fined for minor infractions. When officers catch undocumented immigrants driving without licenses, they often must impound the vehicle and spend their valuable time filling out and filing paperwork. If, instead, these residents were able to become trained, licensed drivers, the roads would be safer and the Policemen would have more time and resources to keep Massachusetts communities safe from those committing real crimes.

In California, where a similar bill was passed, the likelihood of hit-and-run accidents has been reduced by 19%, thereby improving traffic safety and reducing costs for California drivers. The Immigration Policy Lab estimates that about 4,000 hit-and-run accidents were prevented in California because of this bill, and $3.5 million out-of-pocket expenses were saved because more drivers were able to get car insurance. Because of the Massachusetts “no-fault” car insurance laws, drivers affected by hit and run accidents or accidents with people without insurance of their own, the party not at fault would not be responsible for out of pocket costs, however, their insurance company is still impacted by the burden of the incident, each time testing the strength of the Massachusetts economy. If more drivers were able to be insured, costs would be transferred to at-fault drivers’ insurance in the case of a car accident, which would lower overall insurance rates, thereby maintaining the strength of our economy.

Providing undocumented immigrants with access to driver’s licenses will continue to create positive externalities for the communities in which they live. Each time they are able to legally drive to work, each resident is able to contribute
to the great workforce of Massachusetts, stimulating our economy. Each time they are able to bring their children to school, they are helping to raise the minds that will help the Commonwealth flourish tomorrow. This bill does not allow these residents to receive public benefit or do anything beyond what they were doing before, but it will allow them to contribute to Massachusetts legally.

As someone who supports bills pertaining to traffic safety, children's welfare, and the right to equal healthcare, we urge you to move forward to push this bill through, as the financial and social benefits far outweigh any menial costs.

Following the passage of new legislation in 2016, 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 push to have a hearing on this bill as soon as possible, because now, more than ever before, is the time to pass this bill. In addition to making Massachusetts roads safer and stimulating the economy, Bill S.2061/H.3012 will increase local and state governments’ revenue and decrease insurance payments for every driver in Massachusetts.

 Regards,
 Hannah Glock & Jacqie Wycoff

■ Letter to the Legislator

Dear Senator Barrett,

We are writing to you to urge you to push through Bill S.2061/H.3012, An Act relative to work and family mobility, which would allow undocumented residents within the Commonwealth to apply for and obtain standard Massachusetts driver’s licenses. This act will make Massachusetts roads safe by ensuring that every driver can become trained, licensed, and insured. This could decrease the number of hit-and-runs and lower insurance rates for all Massachusetts residents, which will make Massachusetts roads safer for all drivers.

This bill is incredibly important to us and those in our community, and we have seen the impacts of living without a license first-hand. The regulation that restricts undocumented immigrants from obtaining licenses affects every person within the Commonwealth to some extent. Those who cannot legally obtain licenses are people with jobs, families, and responsibilities that require them to use a car. Whether it’s taking their kids to school, driving them to work, or rushing a family member to the hospital, driving in Massachusetts is a necessity, no matter a person’s immigration status. Additionally, allowing all qualified drivers to become trained, licensed, and insured, would provide more security and safety for all individuals and families residing in the Commonwealth. This could decrease the number of hit-and-runs and lower insurance rates for all Massachusetts residents.

A local mother in our community told us a story of an instance in which her young daughter was injured at school and she could not drive her to the hospital, which meant the school had to call an ambulance, which placed a huge financial burden on the family. She also struggles to find employment in her community because of a lack of reliable public transportation.

When California passed a similar bill, the likelihood of hit and run accidents in the state 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 externalities for the communities in which they live. As a member of the Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security, we know that residents’ safety matters to you; and this bill would increase the safety of the people of the Commonwealth and allow Police to use their resources more efficiently within their communities. Following legislation passed in 2016, there is now a distinction between standard and REAL-ID compliant licenses: state residents will have two options for their driver’s license or ID card: a REAL-ID-compliant one, or a standard Massachusetts state license. 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 as soon as possible, because now, more than ever before, is the time to pass this bill.

Sincerely,

Hannah Glock & Jacqie Wycoff

■ Excerpts from Campaign Journals

Hannah

On Meeting with a Student with Personal connection to the bill

After reaching out to a number of different people – friends, peers, classmates – I was connected to someone who had a story to tell. This person, whose name I will keep confidential, is a student at Brandeis whose parents are undocumented. While he, himself, is a citizen, his parents’ lack of citizenship affected his childhood in a number of ways. He found it difficult to ever feel entirely safe, for his parents feared deportation or fines if ever being caught by the police. He described a specific situation, in which his parents were involved in a minor car accident that was the fault of the other driver – and because they remained at the scene, they
were heavily fined for not having an ID. In another instance, his parents were unable to get allergy medication, which happened to require showing an ID, until he was old enough to have his own valid form of ID – his driver’s permit.

Hearing this story changed the way I looked at the bill entirely. As a generally analytically-minded person, I was looking at the bill as something that was logical for x, y, and z reasons – but this wasn’t so simple. This was a bill that was affecting real people – real children, even – and facts and figures didn’t say anything next to the stories of real people with real hardships. The most striking part of this story was how much the issue affected not only undocumented residents, but also their children and family members. Families were suffering because of the law, and the bill could change that.

I found that following this meeting, and after hearing other stories, I was motivated to advocate for this bill for the right reason – because I cared. Finally understanding who and what we are fighting for made all the difference. Legislators respond to people and their stories, and now, I had stories to share.

Jacqie

*On Meeting with Senator Crighton*

My partner, Hannah Glock, and I met with Senator Crighton during our first visit to the Statehouse with our class, as we all met with the sponsors of our bills to establish a greater understanding of the context and idiosyncrasies we may not have been able to fully explore in our research. Stretched thin, as policymakers often are, Senator Crighton arrived a bit after our conversation had already begun with his legislative aide, Dulce Gonzalez, who is spearheading his office’s efforts regarding An Act relative to work and family mobility. We connected first over schooling and career interests, then found ways to integrate our intentions with this advocacy project into the conversation – this is beyond a ‘school project,’ and I believe this ultimately led to a more meaningful conversation about advocacy after the Senator arrived. After enthusiastic introductions, we were able to ask the Senator about why the bill meant so much to him for this particular session, and he was able to explain to us more of the more political circumstances that made this bill more timely than ever, demonstrating the importance of attaining first-hand information. Listening to him speak so eloquently about this bill in ways that were personal, logical, and compelling all at the same time made me feel as though he was a good model for advocating this bill and structuring arguments for it. During our conversations, I believe the Senator was impressed with the amount of research we had done and the complexities we were familiar with on the bill already, and again, this investment certainly aided in creating a more productive conversation overall. However, this meeting also made it very clear what our weak spots were in our knowledge of the bill. As the Senator pointed out, any counter-argument for this bill can be rationally argued against, but we realized that without the facts, research, or evidence to establish an argument, we would not be fulfilling our full potential as advocates. Overall, meeting with Senator Crighton and legislative aide Dulce Gonzalez helped us to take a closer look at our own work, and while they were also unaware of a full coalition backing the bill (only individual organizations), they emphatically encouraged us to continue our advocacy work by meeting with policymakers and reaching out if we wanted.

**Update**

As of August 11: There has been no action taken on this bill.

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**For more information**

View the bill (MA legislature website):
S.2061: https://malegislature.gov/Bills/191/S2061
H.3012: https://malegislature.gov/Bills/191/H3012

Organization or Coalition support:
Cosecha: https://www.lahuelga.com
MIRA: http://miracoalition.org
32BJ: https://www.seiu32bj.org/districts/new-england-615/
Although Massachusetts prides itself on being at the forefront of innovation and education, there is a portion of Massachusetts residents that are excluded from higher education at alarming rates. Students with intellectual and developmental disabilities have low enrollment rates in higher education institutions because of barriers that make attending and enrolling in higher education institutions extremely difficult. Said students are faced with the unfair challenges which include academic and college aptitude tests, minimum GPAs, and course requirements. Those who fall within this category of students are not given access or opportunity to participate in higher education programs. Attending college improves the likelihood of employment, stronger independent living skills, and good quality of life.

■ The Bill:

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

■ Elevator Speech:

Good morning Senator,

We can all agree that obtaining a higher education makes individuals more likely to become employed and have greater individuality.

Our time at our university has helped us develop skills that are not only personally useful but applicable to our career aspirations. Data from national reports shows that “over 60% of adults with Intellectual Disabilities who attended college were able to find paid employment, compared to an employment rate of 16% for those who did not” (MAFC 2019). Creating opportunities for anyone to obtaining a higher education is why we are here today.

Our focus is on S.756/H.1219 An Act to create opportunities in higher education for students with intellectual disabilities, Autism, and developmental disabilities. This bill will grant students the opportunity to be immersed in a university environment that will have immense benefits on their personal and professional lives. “Special education services for these students are often provided in ineffective and segregated programs, leading to poor employment outcomes, reliance on day habilitation programs, and costly dependence on government subsidies and support for much of their adult lives”.

It encourages people with autism and various intellectual disabilities to choose higher education as a pathway for their life and break down the barriers preventing them from entering a college or university.
It is a must-pass bill. Obtaining a degree from a higher educational institution opens doors economically and academically that we can agree are vital to sustain life financially. The more educated people we have within our society the more productive a nation we can be.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration. We hope that we can work with you to support this bill and its passage. Have a wonderful day!

**Excerpts from Storybook**

“Yes my son is 10 years old, but I want him to start thinking about college and his future and have big aspirations. Just because he has autism my son should not feel like his future is limited in anyway. College is an option, a career is an option, dreaming big is a must. My kids having autism means that they think differently than others, it doesn’t mean that they should be the pride of opportunities that everybody should have” – Mother of son with autism

**Op-Ed**

_Sabrina_

**There Are No Limits to Breaking Down Limitations**

Watching your children grow up and graduate high school is a moment that is memorable for both the parent and kid. Every year hundreds of thousands of people look forward to this one event, graduation. It is a part of life that we just assume most people participate in. The idea of college after high school is seen as the standard and those who choose not to attend are making a choice outside of the norm. This choice can be for a variety of reasons however, it is important to note that it is a decision. But what about those who do not have a choice to go to college? Not because of financial barriers or lack of desire to, but because the admission criteria is exclusive and hinders certain people from participating. People with disabilities are barred from entering college at significantly high rates because of unfair and discriminatory criteria that makes attending college challenging.

Many people do not realize that a significant portion of the United States population has a disability. The CDC reports that 26% of Americans have a disability of some kind (CDC 2019). That is 1 in 4 Americans, whether it be mobility, hearing, or vision-based, fall within this category across all ages. The most common among them are related to learning at 42% (CDC 2019). Students with disabilities are entering college at a far lesser rate than their counterparts because they are unable to meet the requirements set by public state colleges. Although access to higher education for this group of people has always been a problem, it is essential that we stop to address this issue now in lieu of our rapidly changing workforce. Entry level jobs that typically require a high school diploma have increased their requirements to include some form of higher education. In 2020 35% of job openings will require at least a bachelor’s degree (Georgetown Public Policy Institute 2014).

Currently in Massachusetts, a program called the Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Initiative (ICEI) is active in 13 schools across the state (Mass Department of Higher Education 2019). It is a program that partners with high schools in the state to aid students with disabilities in pursuing higher education courses and degrees. In addition, bill S.756/H.1219 An Act to create opportunities in higher education for students with intellectual disabilities, autism, and developmental disabilities, supports this program and is being discussed by legislators. If passed, this bill will grant students the opportunity to be immersed in a university environment that will have immense benefits on their personal and professional lives. It will not require these students to be evaluated based on GPA, academic requirements, MCAS, and other standardized exams. The purpose is to create more accurate methods of reviewing students since the current methods are not appropriate for measuring a student’s intellectual capabilities.

It is not a secret that the more educated people we have within our society the stronger we are as a nation. I believe that states across the United States should adopt the ICEI and encourage more students with disabilities to attend college if they desire to. More so, the initiative promotes inclusion and diversity among universities. National data from the Board on Children, Youth, and Families reported that “special education services for these students are often provided in ineffective and segregated programs, leading to poor employment outcomes, reliance on day habilitation programs, and costly dependence on government subsidies and support for much of their adult lives” (Breiner & Bonnie 2015). By creating space for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities in higher education we are giving millions of people the opportunity to enter the workforce, participate in the economy, and fully utilize their civic identity. I urge Massachusetts residents to reach out to their legislators advocating for the passage of the bill S.756/H.1219 that will continue to provide for students within their state. Let’s not have another June go by with hundreds of students not having a plan for their future.

Attending college is an opportunity for students with disabilities that impacts their lives outside of the classroom. It is the chance for students to gain knowledge, meet new people, develop viable skills for the workforce, and become employed. This should not just be seen as beneficial for students with disabilities. Non-disabled students and faculty will get to work alongside people who differ from them in an environment that promotes learning and inclusion. It is a valuable experience that everyone should have.
Joelle
You’re a parent who graduated with a college degree from a top tier Massachusetts state university. You dream of handing down your college sweatshirt to your child and helping them move into their dorm freshman year. Your child has autism and they are incredibly smart, but struggle passing the state academic requirements and the university’s minimum requirements. Unfortunately, your child cannot seize the opportunity to advance their education because the idea of attending college is not presented to them and they have no support or people in their corner when coming up with a plan. They want to advance their education. They want to be independent and attend college. They want to graduate with a degree in psychology and help people. They want more and you know they work hard and deserve the chance to do more.

And now you must look them in the eyes and tell them, they can’t pursue their dream.

Students with intellectual and developmental disabilities and autism are not presented the opportunity to engage in college experiences with non-disabled students. These students are missing the opportunity to advance their education and find their passion in life. Additionally, they are at a disadvantage for developing the social and independent skills necessary for entering the workforce. We call our nation the “land of opportunity” – how can we say this if not everyone is being presented the same opportunities?

National data shows that 60% of people with intellectual disabilities with college experience are employed versus the 16% who are without the experience. This gap speaks for itself – people with cognitive disabilities who have college experience are far more likely to be employed. As our economy moves forward these next few years, it is becoming more important to receive a college education. It is predicted by 2020 that there will be 55 million job openings. However, 65% of these jobs will require a BA, some college, or an associate degree. If students with intellectual and developmental disabilities and autism are not presented the opportunity to attend college, they are at a disadvantage and will not qualify for over half the available jobs.

Bill S.756/H.1219, An Act creating higher education opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities, autism, and other developmental disabilities will break down the barriers that prevent students with said disabilities from attending college. The bill will allow students with disabilities to apply to state universities and colleges in Massachusetts without passing college entry requirements or state academic minimums. State colleges and universities will be required to promote inclusion among students with and without disabilities both in academic and non-academic settings.

The Department of Higher Education will provide grants to schools that promote more inclusion. In addition, the Department will form relationships between universities and other government agencies and departments who are engaged with students who have intellectual and developmental disabilities and autism.

This bill will open so many doors for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities and autism. Students will be presented with more options following their high school education. They will be included in all college activities and able to learn from the same experiences as everyone else. Students with intellectual and developmental disabilities and autism will qualify for more jobs and have more confidence and be able to find their passion in life.

Show your support for this bill by writing to Senator Anne M. Gobi, the Senator Chair for the Joint Committee on Higher Education, pushing for a hearing for Bill S.756/H.1219 and favoring the bill.

Every child deserves the opportunity to be presented the choice to attend college – it should not be decided for them ahead of time.

### House Ways & Means Script

We are Sabrina Howard and Joelle MarkAnthony and we are students of Brandeis University who are passionate about creating equal academic opportunities for students with disabilities. Today, we are urging you to pass S.756/H.1219: An Act creating higher education opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities, autism, and other developmental disabilities. This bill will break down barriers for students with said disabilities to encourage growth in independence and the workforce.

National data has shown an employment rate of 16% for adults with intellectual disabilities who did not attend college. This number skyrocketed to 66% for those who did attend college. Creating opportunities for anyone to obtaining a higher education is why we are writing to you today. Every student deserves and has the right to the opportunity to attend college. Attending a college or university not only has academic benefits, but also provides the opportunity to gain independence and social skills necessary for entering the workforce.

Currently, there is no proposed budget for the government on solving this issue. This bill proposes that government agencies and offices will offer grants to state universities and colleges for implementing better inclusion for disabled students. These grants will ensure the inclusion that the government and schools should be providing as their moral and ethical responsibility.

During the 2018 fiscal year $1,485,910 was spent on the Massachusetts Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment
Initiative (MICEI). Public higher education institutions can receive more funding through grants specifically designed to enroll and accommodate students with intellectual and developmental disabilities and autism. The funds will be used to retain employment specialists; assist students in meeting integrated competitive employment and other transition related goals; adopting procedures and funding mechanisms to ensure that new partnerships of public institutions of higher education and school districts providing inclusive concurrent enrollment programs fully utilize the models and expertise developed in existing partnerships; and conduct evaluations and research to further identify student outcomes and best practices; provided further, that the department of higher education shall be stronger and more inclusive to all.

Investing in this bill and providing grants will not only boost the confidence of individuals with disabilities but it will also aid the economy in the long run. With more people attending colleges and universities, the more people who will be qualified to fill jobs. People will be able to be more independent faster and companies will have the support and people they need to grow.

Every student deserves the opportunity to advance his or her learning should they wish to do so. We encourage you to pass this bill and change the future of all students for the greater good.

■ Letter to the Legislator

Dear Michael J. Barrett,

We are Joelle MarkAnthony and Sabrina Howard, student advocates from Brandeis University supporting S.756/H.1219: An Act creating higher education opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities, autism and other developmental disabilities. We are passionate about this bill’s passage since it will break down the barriers that currently make attending a higher education institution inaccessible for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities or autism. Everyone should have equal access to the opportunity to further one’s education. Obtaining a degree from a higher education increases chances for employment and allows a person to have greater independence.

It is paramount that students with said disabilities are given the chance to advance their education should they choose to. Currently, only 14.8% of Massachusetts residents with a cognitive disability aged 21-64 have a BA degree or higher. This number is inexcusably low. So much of the problem stems from the fact that these students are faced with the barriers of academic minimums and university enrollment requirements. This bill will create partnerships and new relationships among education departments and state departments with higher education institutions. Said institutions will be able to receive grants for implementing stronger inclusivity and creating better access for students with developmental and intellectual disabilities and autism.

We can all agree that obtaining a higher education makes individuals more likely to become employed and have greater individuality. Students with intellectual and developmental disabilities or autism will be given the chance to engage with students disabled and non-disabled. It is important for students to take part in academic and non-academic activities to form independence and real world skills. By interacting with people from all walks of life, students build their own identities and form their own opinions. Because of this, it is necessary that students with intellectual and developmental disabilities are presented the opportunity to attend higher education institutions to form the skills necessary for employment. National reports show an employment rate of 16% for adults with intellectual disabilities who did not attend college. This number skyrockets to 60% for those who did attend college. Creating opportunities for anyone to obtaining a higher education is why we are writing to you today.

We hope you encourage and support the passing of this bill to ensure a brighter future for all the students of Massachusetts.

Sincerely,
Sabrina Howard & Joelle MarkAnthony

■ Excerpt from Campaign Journals

Sabrina

On meeting with Senator Pacheco’s aide, Brandon

Joelle and I were asked where we were from. I replied New York City and Brandon said he was going to see Harry Potter with his girlfriend in the following weeks. We chatted about the play and the city and plans for post-graduation. It was nice to see Brandon’s guard drop for a bit. We felt that being connected we had a better chance of him actually passing along our message to the Senator who was out of the office at the time. When we went back to Senator Pacheco’s office during our second visit, the office was very busy and we could not even get a foot in the door. A women at the desk asked why we were there and told us to wait outside for someone. Brandon came out to speak with us. It did not seem like he remembered who we were. He asked how he could help and after our 30 second elevator pitch about a clip for our video, Brandon said he would pass the message along and turned for the door. I asked how Harry Potter was. He loved it and said he’d highly recommend it. The conversation about the play lasted longer than the one about the bill/video. I think because we went in with the expectation that we would speak with someone, it was a little abrupt when we were talked to in the hallway for a few minutes.
On call with Sylvia*, mother of child with autism

I know Sylvia from back home in New York City. She is 30 years old and has three children. She is aware that many of my projects involve my interviewing people and was happy to help. We set up a time to speak on the phone. I explained to her first via email what the assignment was and what bill we were working with. When on the phone I spent time going over what the class was like and what I had researched so far.

Sylvia and I spent time thinking about the ICEI and if there were any programs in NY that were similar. Sylvia said that she would vote or advocate for the bill if she could. I had a list of questions to ask in relation to the bill and her role as a mother of a child with disabilities. She seemed much more comfortable with me asking the questions instead of trying to make conversation out of her answers. Because we were using the quotes from this transcript in our story book I tried to make the questions open ended and jot down what she was saying without paraphrasing too much. I had this interview much earlier in the semester so I was not fully aware of all the pieces of the bill or people involved as I am now.

If I were to do it again, I would ask for a skype call and hopefully have multiple people present. I wanted to have a group of students with disabilities speak about their experience at a higher education institution alongside Sylvia’s testimony about her own kids and her dreams for them. If given more time...this is something I would have liked to do for the video.

*name has been changed

Joelle

On meeting Senator Comerford

Senator Comerford was moved by our advocacy efforts. She said what we were doing was exactly what democracy should be – people advocating for the changes they want to see and approaching their representatives. She said she was not aware of all the good this bill could do and assured us that she would support it and share her support with Senator Anne M. Gobi, the Senator Chair for the Joint Committee on Higher Education.

Senator Comerford made us feel heard and comfortable. She was engaged and asked us questions about the bill and ourselves. We shared our personal stories and she said that she agreed with this bill’s position. She wrote down information and was genuine in her responses. She asked to take a photo of us, and we happily agreed. We asked if she had a minute for us to take a video of her speaking about the bill. She said she would love to, and we recorded the clip on my phone. When we finished, we exited the conference room and Senator Comerford told her aides the number and to begin researching more information and that she was going to speak to Senator Gobi about the bill. She walked us out and we chatted about the bill as we began to leave the State House. It was one of my favorite meetings. I felt heard and like I had made a difference in only a few minutes. This meeting tied everything together about how the advocacy process works and how important it is in legislation.

Update

A joint hearing was held on June 11th. Massachusetts Advocates for Children, one of the testifying advocacy groups reported, “All the self-advocates underscored the importance of attending college with their nondisabled peers, allowing them to gain the skills necessary to secure paid employment and live more independently, actively participating in the community.”

For more information

View the bill (MA legislature website):
S. 756: https://malegislature.gov/Bills/191/S756
H.1219: https://malegislature.gov/Bills/191/H1219

Organization or Coalition support:
Massachusetts Advocates for Children: https://massadvocates.org
Senate 756, based on the success of the Massachusetts Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Initiative (MAICEI), strives to implement inclusive higher education programs across public institutions and therefore bridge the inequitable education gap that currently exists within Massachusetts. Students with disabilities would experience college with their neuro-typical peers as they audit or take credit-bearing courses; attending postsecondary classes while joining extracurricular activities would ultimately lead to an increase in their independence.

**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 Jessica Rosner and my name is Angie Hwang. We are students from Brandeis University passionately advocating for our fellow students with disabilities. We all know that higher education leads to more opportunities beyond academia, including better employment and more independence. The Commonwealth has been a leader in innovative and inclusive education before and has the chance to create monumental change once more by pioneering efforts to bridge the inequitable education gap. As college students, we are extremely concerned that in this day and age, students with disabilities are still being excluded from educational conversations. This lack of education decreases the likelihood of employment - 80% unemployment rate for students with disabilities who did not attend college - which leads to limited independence. They are being deprived of the college experience, but luckily, Senator Lovely and S.756 are working towards more inclusive opportunities by mainstreaming more Massachusetts public universities. This bill would integrate students with disabilities into classrooms with neuro-typical students and eventually lead to a more integrated education and workforce.

As we advocate for this bill with Senator Lovely, we ask you to encourage Senator Gobi, as the Chair of the Committee on Higher Education, to vote favorably for S.756. Thank you for meeting with us. We look forward to seeing the progression of this bill.

**Excerpt from Storybook**

“The problem isn’t to be found in the nature of these students. The problem is to be found in a hierarchical and so-called ‘meritocratic’ system of higher education that systematically
excludes an entire class of our fellow citizens. This bill may cause those of us in college settings some difficulties, from admissions to curriculum design. And it should. Disabled, not disabled, professor or student, we all have much more to gain by embracing this bill and struggling with its implications than we do by maintaining the status quo.” – Stephen Gulley, Ph.D. MSW of Brandeis University

**House Ways & Means Script:**

*To Senator Michael J. Rodrigues and members of Ways and Means Committee:*

We all know higher education leads to more opportunities beyond academia, including better employment and more independence. As college students ourselves, we are extremely concerned by the fact that students with disabilities have been excluded from the college experience. This lack of educational opportunities leads to fewer employment opportunities which then leads to even less independence for these students.

Fortunately, S.756/H.1219 aims to create more opportunities for students with disabilities in higher education, which would help to bridge the equitable education gap. This bill works towards mainstreaming more Massachusetts public universities by way of integrating students with disabilities into classrooms with neuro-typical students. This would eventually lead to a more integrated education and workforce. In order to implement this bill, a grant program would need to be funded in order to give financial aid to the state universities accepting these students. This grant program would assist in meeting the transitional needs of eligible students and support partnerships that provide the participation of students with disabilities in credit-bearing and non-credit courses. This program may seem financially daunting; however, the funds from the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) would be purposed towards funding this initiative. The IDEA mandates the federal government to provide 40% of funding for special education but has yet to uphold this empty promise. That is a matter of federal accountability, not state responsibility.

In addition to federal funds being allocated for S.756/H.1219, a similar program, the Massachusetts Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Initiative (MAICEI), already exists and has been successfully mainstreaming students with disabilities since 2007. MAICEI offers grants to school districts that send their eligible students (aged 18 to 21) with intellectual disabilities to attend postsecondary. The success of MAICEI has already demonstrated that such efforts to bridge the inequitable education gap can be implemented in Massachusetts and monumentally change the lives of students with disabilities. S.756/H.1219 would go even further than the objectives of MAICEI by allowing these students to become more independent by attending public universities with the intentions of gaining experience and later joining the workforce, which would be seen as a return for the economy. These students would have more options in terms of employment, increasing the likelihood of them being actively involved within their community and independently earning their own incomes.

Transitional programs, such as MAICEI and similar programs set up by organizations like Massachusetts Advocates for Children, assists students with disabilities in integrating into mainstream life after secondary schooling. Although such initiatives help these individuals beyond academia, they are only baby steps towards achieving a more inclusive workforce and society; the passing of S.756 would serve as an essential stepping stone. In addition to creating more equitable education opportunities for all, integrating students with disabilities into higher education would be a benefit for the public good because it would lead to lower unemployment rates as 80% of people with disabilities who did not attend college are currently unemployed. With a higher education, these students would have more options for employment, and therefore, more independence. As illustrated by research conducted on programs similar to MAICEI and S.756/H.1219, we have learned that integrating students with disabilities into higher education is more financially feasible than programs for students in Kindergarten through 12th grade. The House ways and means budget for earlier services in Massachusetts is $30,825,436 while the budget for the MAICEI program is $2,002,977. As an extension of the MAICEI program, S.756 would not require any additional funds as it would be covered by the funding allocated from the federal government for IDEA.

Opponents may argue that utilizing funding from IDEA for S.756 may negatively impact the funding for other district programs. Tom Sannicandro, the director of the Massachusetts Association of Community Colleges, explained how superintendents of school districts may not want to support S.756/H.1219 because of the time and money needed to support such programs. However, the program does not take away resources from neuro-typical students but creates more opportunities for students with disabilities, a community that has been underserved for far too long. With MAICEI already existing in 16 Massachusetts schools with two universities being self-sufficient, consistent funding is all that is necessary to maintain this initiative.

The Commonwealth has been a leader in innovative and inclusive education before and has the chance to create monumental change once more. Numerous early intervention and secondary services exist for younger individuals with disabilities while minimal resources are available for those after high school. As we advocate for this bill along with Senator Lovely, we ask you to consider maintaining consistent funding for this program as it will benefit not only students
with disabilities but all of society. Thank you for meeting with us. We look forward to seeing the progression of this bill.

Letter to the Legislator

Dear Senator Michael Barrett,

As students who attend Brandeis University, we are pleased to see that within your successful career in the House of Representatives and now in the Massachusetts Senate, you have been a champion of civil rights for marginalized communities. When you began as a legislator, one of the most underserved populations were those with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and even to this day, they still remain deprived of certain opportunities, such as education. We are advocating for a bill (S.756, H.1218, and H.1219) to help these students and are now asking for you your help as we continue this journey.

As the youth of Massachusetts, students, regardless of the presence or absence of disabilities, deserve the chance to pursue their educations. We can all agree that higher education leads to more opportunities beyond academia, including more employment and more independence. However, the majority of students with disabilities (SWDs), specifically intellectual disabilities, autism, and other developmental disabilities, currently do not have the option to attend college. Only 66.5% of SWDs graduate high school with an even smaller percentage pursuing postsecondary education.

As a state, we have the opportunity to advocate for these students with S.756/H.1219. An Act creating higher education opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities, autism, and other developmental disabilities. Through mainstreaming, the integration of students with disabilities with neurotypical students into one environment, S.756/H.1219 would enable these students to attend public universities in the state and receive certificates after completing credit bearing courses, which leads to more employment choices and more independence.

Opposition to this bill may include the administration of universities/colleges and neurotypical students along with their parents. First, donors and alumni may argue the prestigious reputations of these universities would shift after accepting SWDs who are “unqualified” because they did not pass the MCAS or receive their high school diplomas, however this claim cannot be substantiated.

Second, administration may be hesitant to support this bill because the financial aspects behind providing specialized resources for these new students being integrated into their schools. In addition, neurotypical students and their parents may oppose because they may assume mainstreaming would take away opportunities from them. However, an initiative similar to the objective of S.756 known as the Massachusetts Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Initiative (MAICEI) already exists and has been successfully mainstreaming SWDs into colleges since 2007. As a matter of fact, MAICEI has been so successful that S.756 is an extension of this program and creates more equitable opportunities for all youth in Massachusetts rather than taking away from one student to empower another.

As the former chair of the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities and the Disabilities Caucus, you have protected those with disabilities before and have the opportunity to do so once again. We encourage you, as the Senator of our district, to bolster this bill as it moves through committees, especially in the Ways and Means Committee. Thank you for being such a powerful advocate for minority groups, including individuals with disabilities. We look forward to seeing the progression of S.756/H.1219.

Sincerely,

Angelina Hwang and Jessica Rosner

Excerpts from Campaign Journals:

Angie

On meeting with Senator Lovely and Legislative Director, Mark Sternman

Before making our way downtown to the State House, I prepared questions for Senator Lovely and her legislative director, Mark Sternman. They were both caring and passionate... She shared her personal story but could not tell me the definition of a “severe disability”, in regards to the bill. Mark admitted that the guidelines that would be established have yet to be addressed and would not be determined until after the bill passes. According to Mark, a symbiotic relationship exists between legislators and the various departments that have in the past and will continue to collaborate to create the best possible Commonwealth, so they will work together to consider which guidelines would best serve the most students. Senator Lovely expressed that she is more than willing to be flexible in revising the bill as long as changes would make S.756/H.1219 stronger, better, and more inclusive; learning about her openness to evolve the bill as the conversation shifts was reassuring to me as a student in higher education and as an advocate of educational equity for students with disabilities. Although she could not answer all of my burning questions, our meeting was a success. I learned her personal story and her motivation behind her passionate advocacy for this marginalized community. We connected today not only as players in the legislative process but also as individuals who dream of and strive towards equity for those with disabilities. Our first meeting went really well, and I remember feeling even more excited to advocate with Senator Lovely and Mark, who provided his business card and offered to speak to me about the bill whenever.

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Jess

On meeting Julia Landau, Massachusetts Advocates for Children

Angie and I had a meeting with Julia Landau, a representative from Massachusetts Advocates for Children on April 10, 2019 in her office at MAC in Boston. This meeting was extremely informative and also a bit overwhelming. Julia is an intense and impressive person and was every bit as knowledgeable as I imagined her to be (both Tom and Johanne told Angie and I we should speak with her because of how much she has done for the bill’s progress). During our meeting, we discussed all of the meetings that Angie and I previously had and all we had learned from the Senators. She asked what we were telling senators when we met with them so I began to tell her our elevator pitch. I was not quite prepared to do the speech yet again as it had almost been a month since I had said it. As I began to give the speech, I said “Massachusetts has fallen behind in education” and she got very offended by this statement. Luckily, Angie saved me as I stammered and tried to find the words to continue.

The rest of the meeting went very well as we discussed the budget process (as one of the budgets for 2020 had just come out) and she explained how S.756 would require no additional money as it would be an extension of the line item of MAICEI. Something I learned from the meeting with Julia is that it is okay to be intimidated by someone as impressive as Julia but to remember that she is just like me, a passionate person trying to help others. If I ever encounter someone like Julia again, I think I will definitely be better equipped and will know how to respond if I am asked difficult questions.

Update

A joint hearing was held on June 11th. Massachusetts Advocates for Children, one of the testifying advocacy groups reported, “All the self-advocates underscored the importance of attending college with their nondisabled peers, allowing them to gain the skills necessary to secure paid employment and live more independently, actively participating in the community.”
Sexual Education for Youth

Requiring public schools teaching sex education to use a comprehensive, medically accurate, research-informed, and age-appropriate curriculum.

Ione Hughes ’19
Katherine Laemmle ’20

The importance of exposing youth to the topics of age-appropriate sexual education and healthy relationships cannot be overstated. Sex education should be comprehensive, and cover topics of consent and sexual assault and harassment, pregnancy prevention, and ways to avoid sexually transmitted diseases and infections. Comprehensive sex education is about more than just sexual activity - it covers how to have healthy, functioning relationships. It gives young people the tools they need to tackle the confusing world of relationships, sex, and more. Sexual education should teach the benefits of abstinence and delaying sexual activity in conjunction with the importance of using various methods of contraception to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections; teach young people the skills to implement these safe sex practices; and help students to develop relationship and communication skills to form healthy relationships free of violence or coercion, and to make informed decisions about their own relationships and sexuality. This education should be inclusive and appropriate for students regardless of gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status.

The Bill
S.263 An Act relative to healthy youth

Elevator Speech
Our names are Katharine and Ione and we are both students at Brandeis University. Everyone should have the opportunity to thrive in healthy, consenting relationships. To ensure that this opportunity is available to everyone, it is vital that we better educate young people about consent and healthy relationships. National Research reveals that 1 in 3 teens report knowing friends or peers who have experienced dating abuse. Additionally, the Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey reveals that 1 in 10 teens report being physically and/or sexually abused by a dating partner. As female college students in Massachusetts, we are very concerned by this. Comprehensive sex education programs will address these alarming statistics by teaching students to understand the words “YES” and “NO” and respect the boundaries of their peers.
These skills will enable students to engage in healthy, consenting relationships. The Healthy Youth Act addresses this issue by ensuring that Massachusetts schools that offer sex education are teaching comprehensive, age-appropriate, and medically-accurate information.

We urge you to hold a hearing immediately and vote The Healthy Youth Act out favorably.

**Excerpts from Storybook**

“No one should have to say #metoo. Especially young people.”
– Planned Parenthood

“If children are going to grow up to have agency and make their own choices, they need complete and correct information.” – Keridwen Luis, Professor at Brandeis University

“I feel like I wasn’t prepared at all.” – student

“People think [sex education] is the responsibility of the parents, but it is hard for parents to deal with” – Keridwen Luis, Professor at Brandeis University

Prof. Luis responds to opponents of the bill who believe that comprehensive sex education will lead adolescents to have sex earlier by stating that “there is no evidence that comprehensive sex ed. leads to earlier sex” and that “there is really good evidence that abstinence only sex ed. leads to unsafe sex.”

**Op-Ed**

**Ione**

**An Act Relative to Healthy Youth**

The #MeToo movement shocked millions around the world with its depth and breadth, but for many, the alarmingly low levels of knowledge about the concept of consent is no surprise. The result – cases of sexual assault – shouldn’t be a surprise either. As a female college student in Massachusetts, I have been extremely concerned by the lack of information provided to myself and to my peers throughout our education. The numbers of survivors experiencing sexual assault each year are not just statistics. These numbers are my friends, my peers - and myself. And these numbers are not going down. As a student orientation leader at Brandeis, I’ve seen firsthand the knowledge of consent that students enter college with. This knowledge is not comprehensive, nor is it always medically-accurate.

I am a student at Brandeis University and a resident of Waltham, Massachusetts. I strongly believe that every individual should be provided with the opportunity to thrive in healthy, consenting relationships. I think that we all value this opportunity as residents and members of the community of Massachusetts. To ensure that this opportunity is available to every individual in the Commonwealth, it is absolutely vital that we begin to better educate our young people about consent and healthy relationships.

Currently in Massachusetts, there is no requirement for schools that offer sex education to discuss healthy relationships or consent in their curriculum. These schools are not covering a variety of essential topics, including affirmative and voluntary consent, how to engage in healthy relationships and dating practices, avoidance of STIs and unintended pregnancy, and more. These missing components in many sex education curricula are costing our community by raising uninformed future adults and increasing the state’s healthcare spending on medical concerns that could easily be prevented with comprehensive sex education. Comprehensive sex education has been shown to help youth delay sexual activity until later in life, reduce numbers of sexual partners, and increase condom and contraceptive use - all of which help limit the risk of transmission of STIs and unintended pregnancy. In a study of comprehensive sex education programs, it was shown that 40% of participants delayed sexual initiation, reduced their numbers of sexual partners, or increased contraceptive use; and 60% reduced unprotected sex. Adolescents are the most at-risk for transmission of STIs, and thus the most in-need of comprehensive, age-appropriate, and medically accurate sex education.

Given our state’s proud history of progressive legislation that aims to protect and empower our citizens, it stands to reason that we would support a bill that would reduce instances of sexual assault by educating Massachusetts youth about healthy, consensual relationships. According to Planned Parenthood, “We can combat sexual assault at its roots by teaching young people how to build healthy, respectful relationships.” The #MeToo movement was a nationwide wake-up call - and Massachusetts needs to be at the forefront of vital changes to ensure that nobody has to say “me too,” ever again.

Experts agree that comprehensive sex education is the best way to ensure that adolescents have the knowledge necessary to engage in healthy, consenting relationships. The Healthy Youth Act works toward the goal of providing members of the community of Massachusetts with the resources they need to lead healthy lives by ensuring that schools that offer sex education are teaching comprehensive, age-appropriate, and medically-accurate information.

As members of the Commonwealth, we all understand the importance of properly educating young people about how to grow up and engage in healthy, consenting relationships. I would like to strongly urge everyone reading this to take
Katherine

Why is Consent Still a Dirty Word?

As spring begins, high school seniors are thinking about leaving home for college, attending prom, and savoring the time they have left with their friends. For students, senior spring is a carefree time to celebrate the past four years and look forward to the next four. For educators, however, senior spring is a high-stakes time to make sure that they have provided their students with the tools they need to succeed in the next stage of their lives. If Massachusetts does not give schools and teachers the tools they need to provide comprehensive sex education, the safety and wellbeing of our state's students is at stake. An Act relative to healthy youth will ensure that educators have done everything their power to protect their students by requiring sex education to be comprehensive, medically-accurate, and age-appropriate. The Healthy Youth Act will equip optimistic high school seniors with the knowledge they need to learn and explore their interests safely during the college years that lie ahead.

The goal of a K-12 education in the United States is to prepare students to become contributing members of society. With the years students spend studying fractions, photosynthesis, George Washington, and conjunctions, shouldn't they spend a few hours here and there learning some practical skills? While there is no doubt that students should learn about these topics, it is also undeniable that there are very few life-threatening situations in which reciting “In 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue,” would lead to safety. There are, however, many life-threatening situations in which comprehensive sex education would lead to safety.

Keridwen Luis, Professor of Women and Gender Studies at Brandeis University, believes that giving students the vocabulary to understand sex through comprehensive sex education is the best way to protect them. According to Jane Doe Inc, there is currently no requirement that sex education in Massachusetts schools be inclusive of the group most at-risk of experiencing teen dating violence—Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) students. The Human Rights Campaign reveals that 42.8 percent of LGB adolescents, compared to 29 percent of heterosexual adolescents, reported being physically abused by a dating partner. Additionally, 23.3 percent of LGB adolescents, compared to 12.3 percent of heterosexual adolescents, reported experiencing sexual victimization. Lastly, the most shocking statistics are on transgender youth, 88.9 percent of whom reported experiencing physical dating violence. Comprehensive sex education will ensure that LGBTQ students know what options and resources are available to them when they need help. Teaching students to understand complicated vocabulary words will help them score perfectly on the verbal section of the SATs while teaching them to understand the words “YES” and “NO” will help them respect the boundaries of others. Public schools in Massachusetts must focus as much on ensuring that students can lead healthy lives in college as they do on ensuring that students can earn a high GPA in college.

Opponents of the Healthy Youth Act often use two arguments to make their case that this bill should not pass. One is that teaching students about sex will cause them to have sex at an earlier age and to have unsafe sex more often. This argument, however, is just as logical as an argument that teaching kids about how heat, fuel, and oxygen create flames will cause them to become arsonists. Studies, Planned Parenthood reports, contradict this argument by suggesting that comprehensive sex education delays the age that adolescents first have sex as well as lowers rates of teen pregnancy and STIs. Another common argument that opponents of this bill use is that sex education is the job of parents, not schools. They believe that parents should be able to decide when and what their children learn about sex. This argument is similar to the argument against teaching evolution in public schools. Both encourage schools to deny their students access to information. We long ago shut down the debate about teaching evolution in Massachusetts public schools because our state values spreading access to information rather than sequestering it. Why, then, should students be entitled to learn about the evolution of the universe but not the evolution of their bodies?

High school seniors need comprehensive sex education to succeed in college and become contributing members of society. We must stop treating consent as a dirty word and instead treat it as a core topic, like fractions or photosynthesis, that schools must teach their students. I urge you to protect the future of optimistic high school seniors by contacting your local Massachusetts representative to let them know you support the bill and contacting the Committee on Education to encourage them to vote the bill out favorably. Additionally, you can help by volunteering with an organization, like Planned Parenthood or Jane Doe, that supports the bill and contacting the Committee on Education to encourage them to vote the bill out favorably. Additionally, you can help by volunteering with an organization, like Planned Parenthood or Jane Doe, that supports the bill and contacting the Committee on Education to encourage them to vote the bill out favorably. Additionally, you can help by volunteering with an organization, like Planned Parenthood or Jane Doe, that supports the bill and contacting the Committee on Education to encourage them to vote the bill out favorably. Additionally, you can help by volunteering with an organization, like Planned Parenthood or Jane Doe, that supports the bill and contacting the Committee on Education to encourage them to vote the bill out favorably. Additionally, you can help by volunteering with an organization, like Planned Parenthood or Jane Doe, that supports the bill and contacting the Committee on Education to encourage them to vote the bill out favorably.
Dear Mr. Michlewitz,

Our names are Ione and Katharine and we are both residents of Waltham, MA. We strongly believe that everyone should have the opportunity to thrive in healthy, consenting relationships. To ensure that this opportunity is available to every individual in the Commonwealth, it is absolutely vital that we better educate our young people about consent and healthy relationships. Your political track record indicates your understanding that investing in education is investing in the future. S.263 shares many of the same goals as other bills you sponsor, such as H.576. Both seek to ensure that students have the resources they need to succeed in school. Although these goals will cost money to achieve, the long-term benefits of providing future generations with the tools they need to lead educated and productive lives will make the investment well worth it.

National Research reveals that 1 in 3 teens report knowing friends or peers who have experienced dating abuse. Additionally, the Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey reveals that 1 in 10 teens report being physically and/or sexually abused by a dating partner. As female college students in Massachusetts, we are very concerned by these statistics. Comprehensive sex education programs will address these alarming statistics by teaching students to understand the words “YES” and “NO” and respect the boundaries of their peers. Schools that do offer sex education are doing a poor job. They are not covering a variety of vital topics including affirmative and voluntary consent, how to engage in healthy relationships and dating practices, avoidance of STIs and unintended pregnancy, and more. This missing component in many sex education curricula is costing our community by raising uninformed future adults and increasing the state’s healthcare spending on medical concerns that could have been prevented with comprehensive sex education. Sex education in Massachusetts must be regulated so that it is age-appropriate, medically accurate, and covers consensual sexual activity and relationships in a manner that is inclusive of all youth.

Age-appropriate, comprehensive sex education is the best way to ensure that adolescents have the knowledge necessary to engage in healthy, consenting relationships. Your bill sponsoring history indicates your commitment to providing members of the Massachusetts community with the resources they need to lead productive and informed lives in a cost-effective manner. The Healthy Youth Act works toward the same goal by ensuring that Massachusetts schools that offer sex education teach comprehensive, age-appropriate, and medically-accurate information without requiring an unreasonable increase in spending.

This bill is a long-term investment. It will ensure that schools equip students with the knowledge they need to become educated citizens that contribute to the community. Bills you sponsor indicate your commitment to providing students with comprehensive and accurate knowledge.

Without An Act concerning genocide education, which you cosponsored, schools would not be required to teach students about the Holocaust and genocide. Similarly, without S.263, schools with sex education are not required to teach students about engaging in healthy, consensual relationships. An understanding of all of these topics is necessary to become an informed and productive member of the Massachusetts community.

The spending required for this bill will reduce the state's spending in other areas, such as healthcare. Comprehensive sexual education has been shown to help youth delay sexual activity until later in life, reduce numbers of sexual partners, and increase condom and contraceptive use - all of which help limit the risk of transmission of STIs and unintended pregnancy. In a study of comprehensive sex education programs, it was shown that 40% of participants delayed sexual initiation, reduced their numbers of sexual partners, or increased contraceptive use; and 60% reduced unprotected sex. Adolescents are the most at-risk for transmission of STIs, and thus the most in-need of comprehensive, age-appropriate, and medically accurate sex education. The cost of implementing this bill, therefore, will reduce the state’s healthcare-related spending, as fewer adolescents will require medical treatment for STIs and unintended pregnancy.

There has been no pushback from Massachusetts schools based on the financial implications of the bill. There is a free curriculum available to teachers that is age-appropriate, medically accurate, and covers all the vital points of the issue. This bill does not mandate implement sexual education in schools. The bill would affect only those school districts that have already integrated sexual education into their curriculum. The highest costs associated with education funding would likely be training teachers on how to properly teach the new comprehensive curriculum. The Massachusetts Teachers Association has vetted the bill and does not believe that the financial implications of this bill would be a barrier to its passing.

Governor Baker has set aside $1 million to fund the Healthy Relationships Grant Program in his budget proposal for the fiscal year of 2020. A percentage of this proposed budget would go towards funding comprehensive sex education in Massachusetts schools. While there would be costs associated with passing this bill through the legislature, Governor Baker agrees that this type of education is vital for ensuring the health and safety of our young people, and thus for the future of all those who reside in the Commonwealth.
As residents of Massachusetts who, as we all should, have a vested interest in this bill, we ask that you ensure that S.263 is provided with the funding it needs to be successful in providing much needed comprehensive sex education for the Commonwealth. It is absolutely vital that this legislation is passed by the Massachusetts legislature and is well-funded. As the Chair of the House Ways and Means Committee, the fate of the Healthy Youth Act lies in your hands - and we implore you to give it the deference it deserves, so that the youth of Massachusetts will have equal access to the skills and opportunities they need to engage in safe, consensual, and healthy relationships with their peers.

**Letter to the Legislator**

Our names are Katharine and Ione and we are both residents of Waltham, MA. We strongly believe that everyone should have the opportunity to thrive in healthy, consenting relationships. To ensure that this opportunity is available to every individual in the Commonwealth, it is absolutely vital that we better educate our young people about consent and healthy relationships.

National Research reveals that 1 in 3 teens report knowing friends or peers who have experienced dating abuse. Additionally, the Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey reveals that 1 in 10 teens report being physically and/or sexually abused by a dating partner. As female college students in Massachusetts, we are very concerned by these statistics. Comprehensive sex education programs will address these alarming statistics by teaching students to understand the words "YES" and "NO" and respect the boundaries of their peers. Given your history of presenting bills that have extended the statute of limitations for certain sexual abuse crimes, we are confident that you will also support this bill that would reduce instances of sexual assault by educating Massachusetts youth about healthy, consensual relationships.

Age appropriate comprehensive sex education is the best way to ensure that adolescents have the knowledge necessary to engage in healthy, consenting relationships. You have a proven record of providing members of the Massachusetts community with the resources they need to lead healthy lives. S.263 furthers that goal by ensuring that Massachusetts schools that offer sex education are teaching comprehensive, age-appropriate, and medically-accurate information.

Opponents of the bill argue that teaching students about sex will cause them to have sex at an earlier age and to have unsafe sex more often. Studies, however, contradict this argument by suggesting that comprehensive sex education delays the age that adolescents first have sex as well as lowers rates of teen pregnancy and STIs.

As a father of five children, you understand the importance of properly educating young people about how to grow up and engage in positive, healthy, mutually respectful relationships. We strongly urge you to hold a hearing immediately and vote The Healthy Youth Act out favorably, for the good of our children and the future of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

All our best,
Katharine & Ione

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**Excerpts from Campaign Journals**

**Ione**

*On meeting with Senator O’Connell’s aide*

We met with her in an attempt to both advocate for our bill and discuss why we felt that the Healthy Relationships line-item should be fully funded to the best of the state’s abilities. For the most part, all of the meetings that we had had previously had seemed very favorable for us. Every senator, House member, or aide to one of these representatives had seemed very on board with our mission and had essentially assured us that they were either in support of our bill or were a declared co-sponsor of the bill.

The aide to Senator O’Connell was the first one who did not immediately assure us that she was in support of us. She offered some … words of support, but followed those up with the fact that she and the Senator had received a multitude of phone calls from constituents arguing against passing the Healthy Youth Act. We immediately inquired as to what their main complaints were with regard to the proposed legislation. The aide informed us that the majority of parents or guardians were disillusioned with the idea of having to “opt-out” of sexual education, rather than “opt-in.” Apparently in the senator’s more conservative districts of Massachusetts, the requirement is that you must opt-in to sexual education for your children, rather than opt-out.

We attempted to give her our arguments to this specific issue, which she appeared to agree with – but we left the meeting with her still saying that she (and the senator) could not fully support our bill so long as their constituents continued to be unhappy with it. While this was frustrating, it was understandable. She wanted to make us happy, but since we were not residents of Senator O’Connell’s district, she could not reasonably offer us exactly what we wanted so long as their actual constituents were not on board. That being said, she did let us know that if the bill did make it to the floor for a vote, it was very likely that Senator O’Connell would vote in favor of it – so hopefully that will be enough.
Katherine

**On meeting with Molly from REACH Beyond Domestic Violence**

Speaking with Molly was very insightful. She shared a lot of information with me about why comprehensive sex education is so important. One reason she gave was that comprehensive sex education is in line with the whole child approach to education. I had never heard of this approach so it was great to have a new piece of evidence to use in support of the Healthy Youth Act. The conversation was also a great opportunity for me to share my knowledge about the bill. Molly had a lot of questions about it so I told her what the bill would do, the advocacy efforts I have been working on, and what she could do to help. Something that I could have done better during this meeting is asking a Molly more about her connections to other coalitions in support of the bill.

**Update**

A hearing was held on May 24th and there appeared to be strong support, with Representative O’Day of the Education Committee saying, “I think this is a bill whose time, absolutely, has come.” A decision has yet to be made on the bill.
Two hundred and fifty thousand undocumented immigrants live in Massachusetts. They fall victim to policing practices meant to intimidate, detain, and deport anyone who comes into contact with law enforcement. As a result, this interjection by federal police results in an array of problems that endanger the lives of those who reside in the state, not only undocumented immigrants themselves. Immigrants are discouraged from reporting crime or assisting in police investigations, causing disruptions in trust for the justice and healthcare systems, and violating due process rights for individuals.

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

■ Elevator Speech
Our names are Hannah Lee and Dariana Resendez and we are students at Brandeis University. We are here because in many parts of Massachusetts, communities are struggling to find peace and safety in their own cities. In our state, local enforcement officers are allowed to act as federal ICE agents by asking people about their immigration status, even when the individual has not committed any crimes. Heightened fear and distrust in immigrant communities weakens community relations and public efforts because unauthorized individuals become hesitant to report crimes or serve as witnesses out of fear of being deported. Accounts of rape, murder, and theft amongst other crimes are going unnoticed in Massachusetts because 173,000 people fear that they will be asked about their immigration status before being offered help.

Just the other day I spoke to a DACA student at Brandeis whose mother is undocumented and lives in Massachusetts. About a year ago, someone broke into her residence and took possessions she had worked tirelessly to earn. Most people would immediately call the cops and report the crime, but she was hesitant that they would ask to see her state identification and, when she failed to provide one, that they would ask about her immigration status. Instead, she picked up the pieces and no investigations were conducted, leaving the offender free to repeat their crime.

Massachusetts is known to be a progressive and liberal state, yet with immigration issues, we fall behind many states that have seen a positive change as a result of laws that are inclusive of immigrant
communities. There are over 140 counties in 7 states where police are not allowed to ask questions about immigration status. A report revealed that there are, on average, 35.5 fewer crimes committed per 10,000 people in counties with this policy compared to those without it. However, only California has passed a law to provide this benefit to all of its cities. We must be innovative and promote legislation that will benefit all communities of Massachusetts.

For this reason, it is imperative that Massachusetts passes S.1401, also known as the Safe Communities Act, which would bar questions about immigration status from being asked and allow the local police to do its job in fighting crime and protecting all Massachusetts residents. We can restore community trust in police, respect due process for all, and make sure no one ever lives in fear by passing this bill. The bill has been to the Senate in a previous session and though it was voted out favorably, time was insufficient and no decisions were reached on the House floor. We ask that you have a hearing as soon as possible and vote in support of this bill, so that its life is prolonged and the safety of the Commonwealth is restored.

### Excerpts from Storybook

“I want to feel safe enough to call 911 in an emergency but there’s always the worry that they will arrest me and not help me.” – undocumented Brazilian woman living in Massachusetts.

“My sisters and I live in constant fear that our mom will be in danger if we report mistreatment from her employer” – undocumented Salvadoran student in Massachusetts.

### Op-Ed

**Hannah**

**This Bill Is For Us All, Not Just Immigrants**

The Trump Administration has managed to spread and continue to act on an anti-immigration agenda across the country. Our newspapers, TVs, and smartphones are being inundated with stories of separated families and imprisoned people of color:

- “An Angel from God, and Border Agents Took Her”
- “471 Parents Were Deported from US Without Their Children During Family Separations”
- “Don’t Stop with Family Separation, End the Whole Immigration Prison System”
- “End Forced Labor in Immigrant Detention”
- “I Am an Immigrant. Someday You Might Be One, Too”

But what will it take for America to truly understand the gravity of the immigration issues we are facing today? On any given day, there are 30,000 to 40,000 people being held in immigration detention, including those who have been arrested in ICE raids, victims of human trafficking, those who arrive at the border seeking asylum, and even working families who get pulled over for a broken headlight. This horrifying, systematic form of arrest and detention, while they await the outcome of their requests to stay in the United States, needs to be checked.

The macro effects of immigration enforcement by the federal government have pressured states to follow a similar regimen. However, the unintended consequences negatively impact all citizens and residents, not just immigrants. It is a civil right to feel safe in your skin, your bodies, and in your communities. The traumas we’ve inflicted on immigrants, caging them in a system that is deliberately set up to block access to resources and due process, have also affected our local communities. People have lived in fear and community trust in the police has been broken. The fear of police encounters and anxiety over possible arrest result in accounts of rape, murder, and theft amongst other crimes going unnoticed in local communities. 173,000 undocumented immigrants in Massachusetts live in fear every minute of every day, thus, they are much more likely to avoid the police in times of need. Crimes of domestic abuse, robberies, and assaults are left unreported, as if they never happened. Those individuals are now existing in our neighborhoods, repeating their crimes against other residents of Massachusetts. We are now looking at a public safety issue, not just an immigration issue.

Surrounded by such inhumane and unjust policies, we must strive to protect our people and show more compassion. Massachusetts has a proud tradition of leading on civil rights, and S.1401 The Safe Communities Act embodies its deeply held values. At a time when the federal government is doing everything in its power to create division and fear, this bill sends a strong message that in Massachusetts, we respect and value all human beings, regardless of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, etc. By drawing a clear line between law enforcement and civil immigration matters, it helps ensure that everyone feels safe calling 911 to report crimes and speaking to police, and it protects due process for all. The Safe Communities Act would ensure that Massachusetts police resources are used to fight crime rather than to assist in federal immigration enforcement, prohibit collaboration agreements between the US Department of Homeland Security and law enforcement agencies that deputize local and state police as immigration agents, ensure due process for immigrants who are detained, and provide crucial training to law enforcement officers about this law.

A bill like this is a less expensive and more humane way of responding to immigration in our country that protects not only immigrant communities, but also all residents in...
Massachusetts. It costs roughly $125.00 taxpayer dollars (per person per day) to detain people in Massachusetts, yet prisons and jails are holding immigrants for long periods of time, ranging from 34 days to 100 days to years. In addition, statistics show that there are an estimated 35.5 fewer crimes committed per 10,000 people in places where policies like The Safe Communities Act exist. This bill strives to protect all residents of Massachusetts and ensure that everyone is safe.

We must end the immigration prison system, arbitrary arrests, racial profiling of individuals, and continued incarceration of innocent people. We must uphold our values as a state and nation dedicated to civil rights, peace and harmony, and respect for human beings. This bill is a step towards creating welcoming and safe communities for all, thus, the importance of passing this act is critical in setting a national trend. Call your local legislators today and ask them to pass The Safe Communities Act.

**House Ways & Means Script**

Dear Representative Jeffrey Sánchez,

In many parts of Massachusetts, communities are struggling to find peace and safety in their own cities. Policies shaped by fear and stereotypes have actually endangered public safety, increased racial profiling, and infringed due process for all. The U.S. is in the midst of a ruthless campaign of deportation, targeting legal and unauthorized immigrants alike. The federal government has even been pushing for proposals that punish “sanctuary cities” where local enforcement in immigration is discouraged, thus, many states have been pressured to cooperate with federal laws. DHS and ICE are using state and local police to help enforce immigration law, which means greater taxpayer money is funneling towards immigration enforcement and detention. In Massachusetts, it costs roughly $125.00 taxpayer dollars (per person per day) to detain people. Yet, prisons and jails are holding immigrants for long periods of time, ranging from 34 days to 100 days to years. In fiscal year 2018, the DHS estimates that there will be an average of 51,379 people held in immigration detention centers each day.

In addition, the 287(g) program, which allows state and local police officers to collaborate with the federal government to enforce federal immigration laws, is incredibly costly for states that want to dedicate resources to implementing, training, and managing the program, since ICE only covers partial costs. Examples of program expenses include: travel, housing, and per diem for officers during training; salaries; overtime; other personnel costs; administrative supplies; and maintaining technology, hardware, and software associated with the program. UNC Chapel Hill reported that the first year of operating the 287(g) program in Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, cost a total of $5.3 million. When local police carry out federal immigration enforcement functions, state resources become incredibly limited, potential for civil liability exists due to unclear authority, reporting of crimes decreases, investigation and litigation assistance by witnesses decreases, and communities lack public safety. All these impacts have detrimental fiscal implications for Massachusetts as it continues to enforce anti-immigration work.

Heightened fear and distrust in immigrant communities weakens community relations and public efforts because unauthorized individuals become hesitant to report crime or serve as witnesses out of fear of being deported. The greatest cost to the state will be the fractured trust between immigrants and local police. Accounts of rape, murder, and theft amongst other crimes are going unnoticed in Massachusetts because people fear that they will be asked about their immigration status before being offered help.

In addition, Massachusetts is home to more than 1.1 million immigrants. More than 1 out of every 7 residents are foreign-born, making them incredibly critical contributors to Massachusetts’ economic success. 58% of Fortune 500 companies based in Massachusetts were founded by immigrants or their children; those firms generate $36.8 billion in annual revenue and employ more than 466,000 people globally. Immigrants are valuable individuals in our state and we ask that the state realize how economically inefficient it is for us to carry out federal law enforcement policies.

If this resonates with you, we hope you can help us push S.1401 The Safe Communities Act forward in the legislature by asking the Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security to hold a hearing so that we can stop using local police funds to tear families apart.

Sincerely,

Hannah Lee and Dariana Resendez

**Letter to the Legislator**

Dear Representative Stanley,

Our names are Hannah Lee and Dariana Resendez and we are students at Brandeis University.

We write in support of S.1401, The Safe Communities Act, and respectfully request that you fight for passage of Senator Jamie Eldridge’s bill.

We are hoping that the bill will advance given the harmful impact that President Trump’s anti-immigration rhetoric is having on immigrant communities in Massachusetts and across the nation. According to ICE data obtained by WBUR, ICE arrests of non-criminal immigrants in New England have more than tripled under President Trump. Nationwide, between February and May of 2017, ICE arrested 108 undocumented immigrants daily with no criminal record,
which represented an increase of 150% from the same time period in 2016.

These aggressive immigration enforcement policies are leaving families fearful of accessing critical health care services and domestic violence victims fearful of seeking help. Orders from the President also threaten the independence and effectiveness of Massachusetts law enforcement by encouraging ethnic profiling, undermining community-police relations, and preventing state resources from being used to improve public safety.

We recently spoke to a student at Brandeis whose mother is undocumented and lives in Massachusetts. About a year ago, someone broke into her residence and took possessions she had worked tirelessly to earn. Most people would immediately call the cops and report the crime, but she was concerned that they would ask to see her state identification and, when she failed to provide one, that they would ask about her immigration status. Instead, she picked up the pieces and no investigations were conducted, leaving the offender free to repeat their crime. Accounts of rape, murder, and theft amongst other crimes are going unnoticed in Massachusetts because 173,000 people fear that they will be asked about their immigration status before being offered help.

Our Commonwealth has a proud tradition of leading on civil rights, and the Safe Communities Act embodies our deeply held values. At a time when the federal government is doing everything in its power to sow division and fear, this bill sends a strong message that in Massachusetts, we respect and value all human beings, regardless of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, etc. By drawing a clear line between law enforcement and civil immigration matters, it helps ensure that everyone feels safe calling 911 to report crimes and speaking to police, and it protects due process for all.

For these reasons, we are requesting your support for the Safe Communities Act, which would:

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

Prohibit collaboration agreements between the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and law enforcement agencies that deputize state and local officers as immigration agents; and

Ensure Due Process rights for immigrants who are detained in state and local facilities; and

Provide crucial training and accountability to law enforcement agencies and their personnel about this law.

The Safe Communities Act would not prevent ICE agents from arresting and detaining immigrants in Massachusetts, but the bill ensures that our state resources are not used to enforce immigration policies that pose dire risks to public health and safety, or support federal efforts to discriminate based on a person’s race, ethnicity, or religion. Such actions harm Massachusetts residents, make our communities less safe, and damage the Commonwealth’s economy.

We thank you for your attention. Massachusetts urgently needs the Safe Communities Act. Please advocate with your colleagues and with House leadership to get a hearing as soon as possible and get it passed in the next session.

Sincerely,

Hannah Lee and Dariana Resendez

Excerpts from Campaign Journals:

Hannah

On Meeting with Senator Chang-Diaz’s Legislative Director, Ernesto Hernandez

Our first meeting on the March 20th Statehouse visit was with Ernesto Hernandez. He currently is the Legislative Director at the Office of Senator Sonia Chang-Diaz and is responsible for legislative and constituent work in Judiciary, Public Safety, Immigration, Public Health, and others. Since this was our first meeting with someone in the Statehouse, I felt nervous and unprepared to begin “real advocacy work” and have the conversations that would push them to fight for passage of the bill. However, when we first met Ernesto, he was incredibly personable and had a great sense of humor. We chatted about Boston, his dogs, college life, etc. as we made our way to the conference room.

After settling down, Dariana and I introduced ourselves and said that we were here to support S1401 The Safe Communities Act. As a Cuban immigrant himself, Ernesto was also very passionate about immigration rights in Massachusetts and felt compelled to do this work at the state level. I felt incredibly comfortable having these conversations with him and glad that he could understand the real issues of immigration and what that meant for people like us—which I have to emphasize is very different than having conversations about immigration with non-people of color. Ernesto was very knowledgeable about the Safe Communities Act, so we didn’t have to reiterate facts and statistics about the bill.

We explained why this bill was important to us, as he did the same. He explained to us how the legislative process works and followed to explain a different bill Senator Diaz was sponsoring, relating to immigration rights. He told us about the Higher Education Equity bill which had not been scheduled for a hearing yet, and told us ways that we could support the bill. In addition, he gave us tips on the opposition, explaining that personal stories really move people and that opponents don’t tend to listen to data. In addition, partnerships with groups or organizations who don’t get involved in advocacy are also very important, such as leadership of higher ed.
Overall, this was a very valuable and great meeting. He was honestly so amazing and I hope we can connect again in the future.

Dariana

On meeting with Liza Ryan of MIRA

We met Liza after a DEIS Impact event called “How Far Does Greater Boston Reach?” where she was a panelist. During the panel Liza explained how MIRA (Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Coalition) works with immigrant groups and individuals throughout all of Massachusetts to guarantee protections to all its residents. She was able to go into details about the SCA and how it has changed from the previous version, including its consolidation (literally shortening the explanation of the bill) to make it more approachable to legislators. She gave us action items that we could follow to get other people to support the bill and we emailed the people she suggested we reach out to. We recently heard back from Representative Tom Stanley of Waltham who said he would support it and reach out to his colleagues in the Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security to ask for a hearing. Our conversation with Liza, albeit short, was incredibly helpful and helped launch a semester’s worth of work.

On Meeting Senator Minicucci’s Legislative Aide, Josselyn DeLeon

Representative Minicucci was on our priority list because she is a member of the Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security. The day before our meeting her aide emailed us explaining that some things had been moved around and the representative would not be able to meet with us, but that she would be happy to do it instead. I feel like this is indicative of how unpredictable this field can be and how that is not always a bad thing.

We met with Josselyn who is only two years our senior. She grew up in Lawrence, which she told us is known as the “immigrant city.” Due to her close association with the topic of the bill, we did not have to explain its potential impact, though we had been prepared to do so due to previous advice, and instead had an incredible conversation about what it means to be a woman of color in a place dominated by white males.

Josselyn explained that at her young age she was able to secure her position through networking with unexpected people, much like we were doing in that moment. She told us to let her know if we ever needed anything and gave us her personal phone number in the event that we had any questions or wanted to grab coffee. I left this meeting feeling a lot more hopeful about the future of spaces I had been so hesitant to join prior to meeting people who made it meaningful.

■ Update

As of August 11: there has been no further action taken on the bill since its referral to the Public Safety and Homeland Security committee in January.

For more information

View the bill (MA legislature website):
S.1401: https://malegislature.gov/Bills/191/S1401
H.3573: https://malegislature.gov/Bills/191/H3573

Organization or Coalition support:
MIRA (Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition): http://miracoalition.org/safe-communities
Combating Sexual Violence on Higher Education Campuses

A comprehensive approach to the issue of sexual violence on campuses

Emily Kessler ’19
Ethan Stone ’19

In 2014, on college campuses in Massachusetts alone, data shows that there were 248 reports of rape yet only 7% were officially reported to school officials (Office of Rep. Ehrlich). Victims do not feel supported by their universities and/or are not aware of their options. National studies have concluded that nearly 1 in every 4 women and 1 in every 13 men are victims of sexual assault, with people of marginalized identities facing increased rates of violence (Association of American Universities). Rape culture and sexual violence are pervasive issues on every campus. The problem is not only that sexual violence exists, it is that rape culture is so prevalent and privilege of perpetrators so intense that we have known the statistics of survivors (1 in 4 and 1 in 13) for years and have failed to take action.

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

Elevator Speech
We are two of the 450,000 college students that come to Massachusetts from around the world every year to get an education. College is meant to represent opportunity, but for many students it will come to represent trauma and shame as well. During their time in college, 1 in 4 women and 1 in 13 men will become survivors of sexual violence. Even more shocking is that 90% of survivors will not report the incident. Students just don’t trust the systems their schools create. Schools lack the guidance they need to address sexual violence, and students are suffering the consequences. An Act relative to sexual violence on higher education campuses (S.764 / H.1209) is a comprehensive measure against sexual violence. It gives us an opportunity to measure and address violence head on by mandating a biennial campus climate survey, creating a state campus safety advisor, mandating prevention training for all new students, and many more resources that empower a campus community to take on sexual violence. We are urging you to commit to vote for this bill and protect all students in Massachusetts from sexual violence.

Excerpts from Storybook
“There is more work needed on the part of college campuses...to do better for their students. At the end of the day, it’s not only about being supported academically, but being supported in all spheres.” – Tanashya Batra, Peer Advocate at the Brandeis University Prevention and Advocacy Resource Center
“As an employee doing this work, [S.764/H.1209] would lend further legitimacy to our roles. We still spend a lot of time … justifying our existence and validating that this work needs to be here. Having legislation would help support that.”
– Sarah Berg, Director at a Prevention and Advocacy Center for students in Massachusetts

“Sustainability and consistency of support would be beneficial for students. [Schools must] acknowledge the issue is present.” – Vilma Uribe, Member of the Massachusetts Governor’s Council on Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence and Survivor Advocate and Empowerment Specialist for students in Massachusetts

Op-Ed
Emily

The Scandal that Colleges Kept Secret for Decades!

“This alleged behavior is antithetical to the core values of our institutions … and has absolutely no place in American higher education,” said Ted Mitchell, president of the American Council on Education, in a statement last month. In 4 women and 1 in 13 men experience sexual violence during their time in college but, no, that’s not what Mitchell is expressing outrage about. Actually, this statement is in reference to the group of approximately 50 parents charged with bribing admissions counselors, coaches and test proctors to secure spots for their children at elite colleges. News of the so-called “scandal” which involved big names like Felicity Huffman and Lori Loughlin has monopolized newspapers and gossip sources alike. Lori Loughlin, along with her husband Mossimo Giannulli, was set to appear in a Boston federal court on April 3rd after posting $1-million bail. For comparison’s sake, Brock Turner, the perpetrator of the most notorious college sexual assault story in recent memory posted a portion of just $150,000. Turner was found guilty of raping an unconscious woman and convicted on three felony counts of sexual assault.

In the age of #metoo, how elite colleges and universities, as well as the law, react to a group of 50 parents is garnering far more attention than how they deal with sexual violence. In November, the Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos proposed major rollbacks to Title IX protections for survivors. Her new regulations are likely to discourage survivors from reporting incidents of sexual violence and to decrease a school’s liability in handling these cases. As many colleges frantically work to put involved coaches and admissions staff on leave and to conduct internal investigations, there is far less urgency when implementing protections for students impacted by sexual violence.

Senator Moore and Representative Tricia Farley-Bouvier have each filed, “An Act relative to sexual violence on higher education campuses” in their respective branches twice before this current session in order to make Massachusetts college students safer and to address the gaps that the Trump administration’s pending proposals would create. S.764/H.1209 would mandate each school appoint a confidential resource advisor, create partnerships with neighboring rape crisis centers, offer prevention training for all new students, faculty and staff and facilitate a biannual campus climate survey with published results. While opposition has never been stated publicly, legislators have indicated that institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth have stymied efforts to pass this legislation in an effort to avoid spending and for fear that publishing findings of a campus climate survey will negatively affect enrollment (Senator Moore). To this, Sarah Berg, the director of a Prevention, Advocacy & Resource Center on a Massachusetts college campus, replied, “Schools are panicking because UMASS doesn’t want to have 30% [rates of incidents] versus BU having 25% … when realistically that difference is arbitrary. This problem is everywhere.”

Colleges, universities and the law are failing to provide adequate resources and attention to this problem. At the bill’s hearing on April 9th, legislators of various ages (including Rep. Lori Ehrlich, Rep. Sarah Peake and Rep. Christina Minicucci) stood before the Joint Committee of Higher Education to express their support for the bill, their own experiences with sexual violence and stated their graduating years. The presence and normalcy of sexual violence on college campuses has persisted for generations, Rep. Stephan Hay, a committee member commented, “Sixties, ’70s, ’80s, ’90s … It’s been going on for way too long”.

The buzz-worthiness of an admissions scandal makes a great story. It is the reaction of urgency on behalf of colleges and law enforcement that is truly the problem as they have failed to respond with the same urgency to the presence of sexual violence on their campuses. Sexual violence has continued to fester at our institutions because it is considered taboo, stigmatized, and survivors have been discouraged from telling their stories. Massachusetts colleges and universities have failed to take action therefore it must become the responsibility of the Commonwealth to hold them accountable for the care of survivors and the safety of all students. Call and write to your legislators urging them to pass S.764/H.1209 favorably and quickly, let’s pass this before the incoming freshmen class arrives in September!

House Ways & Means Script

With graduation approaching, and Ethan and I both finishing up our last semesters, we have spent much time reflecting on the past four years of our college careers at Brandeis University. Like so many nervous high school seniors, we
opened our college acceptance letters with pure excitement. With that acceptance, we had been given an opportunity to pursue an education, to learn about ourselves, and, with a diploma in hand, to advance the prospects of our future. Not only were we getting that opportunity at Brandeis, we were headed for Massachusetts a state internationally recognized for its higher education institutions, and the place we now call home.

Although we were given this incredible opportunity to get an education, we also learned that there are serious problems with the way institutions of higher education address sexual violence on their respective campuses. According to the Association of American Universities 1 in 4 women and 1 in 13 men face sexual violence on college campuses. In 2014, the same year we both applied to college, there were 248 reports of rape on Massachusetts campuses but only 7% of those were officially reported (Office of Rep. Ehrlich). The Commonwealth does not have any set standard of care for survivors or the accused, no mandated climate survey about incidents on campus, no required prevention training for new students and staff and no mandatory confidential on and off campus options for survivors to get help should they need it. Massachusetts is home to more than 100 institutions of higher education, yet has failed to institute protections for the students who reside here (College Stats). An Act relative to sexual violence on higher education campuses, S.764/H.1209, fills in many of the gaps in our current system. This law is necessary to protect students’ well-being and their rights to appropriate resources should an incident of sexual violence occur.

We are aware that in the last session this bill never left the Ways & Means committee, but we are adamant that financial concerns should not stop this piece of legislation from becoming law. Implementing this act is likely to require spending on behalf of schools, not the state. While we recognize that schools have to balance their budgets like businesses, we feel it is bad business to not protect students and staff from sexual violence. Hesitation from schools about this legislation revolves around upfront spending for hiring, training and survey implementation. These costs, like many university costs, are not meant to “pay for themselves” but rather serve as an investment in their students. Just as institutions pay for mental health or police services, they should also be paying for sexual violence prevention. To some extent, they also worry about the long-term financial effects of publishing data about instances of sexual violence on their campuses. Sarah Berg, director of a Prevention, Advocacy & Resource Center, explained, “Schools are panicking because UMASS doesn’t want to have 30% [rates of incidents] versus BU [having] 25% ...when realistically that difference is arbitrary. This problem is everywhere.” It’s true, this problem is everywhere. We need transparency and action.

This should not be a question of spending, these are measures that institutions of higher education should already have in place. State mandates will finally be ensuring action that is long overdue. Now is the time for Massachusetts to capitalize on current movements that call out sexual violence, and to be a national leader as the federal government fails to ensure the safety of our faculty, staff and students. Massachusetts is the state known for having the best colleges and universities, let’s have it be known for the safest too. We hope you attended the hearing held on April 9th, and we urge you to vote this bill out favorably so that the incoming class of freshmen in September can be safer than those who came before them.

Letter to the Legislator
Dear Senator Barrett,

As two of the 450,000 college students who come to Massachusetts every year from around the world to pursue the kind of high-quality education that our state in known for, we urge you to publicly support An Act relative to sexual violence on higher education campuses (S.764/H.1209), ensure that it receives a hearing, and that it is voted out favorably.

Sexual violence is a pervasive issue on every college campus in this country. We know that 1 in 4 women and 1 in 13 men face sexual violence during their time in college. What is more shocking is that a full 90% of survivors do not report their experiences to the authorities. Students do not trust the institutions that are meant to keep them safe to do so, especially those students who are most marginalized.

On September 22nd, 2017, Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos rescinded federal guidelines that strongly encouraged institutions of higher education to prevent and respond to sexual violence. Today, our state’s colleges and universities have no guidance on this issue. In the best case scenario, a school will continue to follow the lead of advocates, experienced professionals, and research. However, many schools do not make that choice.

S.764 / H.1209, which has been referred to the Joint Committee on Higher Education, will place Massachusetts as a national leader in addressing college sexual violence. The bill will mandate a biennial campus climate survey in every school, create a state Campus Safety Advisor, require confidential resources for students on and off campus, provide prevention training for all new students and staff, and stipulate a fair standard of care for both survivors and the accused.

Senator Barrett, your contributions to students and to survivors of domestic violence have earned you our respect and gratitude. As our senator and the Assistant Majority Leader, we call on you to join those two passions and show students that we can count on you to advocate for our safety.
As the Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities, you know the kind of toll that sexual violence can have on people. We know we can count on you to protect Massachusetts college students from that violence.

S.764 / H.1209 provides the policy measures recommended by professionals who advocate for survivors of sexual violence on college campuses. These are the measures called for by student survivors on the steps of the Statehouse and on campuses throughout the Commonwealth. These are the measures that, as student advocates ourselves, are encouraging you to support.

We strongly urge you to publicly support S.764 / H.1209 and work to ensure that it arrives on the governor’s desk.

Sincerely,
Ethan Stone and Emily Kessler, Brandeis University ’19

Excerpts from Campaign Journals

Emily

On Meeting with Senator Michael Moore

This meeting took place during our first class visit to the State House on February 13, 2019. When we arrived, Senator Moore was running late, so we met with his aide Julie for about fifteen minutes before Senator Moore jumped in. The purpose of this meeting was to become more familiar with the bill and especially to get clarification on sections we were unclear about. This meeting helped to do just that, vague parts were given more explanation and they were able put the bill in context both politically and personally for the Senator. This gave us greater insight into his motivations for sponsoring this piece of legislation. Senator Moore and Julie also provided background (or at least their side) as to why the bill had not passed in the past sessions in which it had been filed.

One of the most memorable moments of this meeting for me was the moment when I saw Senator Moore’s attitude shift. He had been late, was recovering from being sick and clearly unhappy about having to attend this meeting. Once Ethan and I began asking pointed questions about the bill, I saw his face lift – it was a complete shift when he realized we had actually read the bill and had some idea of what we were talking about. After this, we had a really great conversation this also served as a confidence booster to Ethan and me to see that we had impressed him and that we actually knew what we were talking about!

On the Hearing at the State House

The hearing for our bill took place at the Massachusetts State House before the Joint Committee on Higher Education on April 9, 2019. We travelled to the hearing with Vilma, who we already had a relationship with from our meeting in February and other Brandeis students (some part-time employees of PARC and others who had simply expressed interest after seeing an all-Brandeis email announcement). It was nice to travel to the hearing with some familiar faces and like-minded students. We spent the bus ride getting to know one another through ice breakers and discussing our connection to the issue.

The hearing was both a wonderful and really challenging experience for me. While I had spent so much time being excited about the momentum H.1208 and H.1209 were getting, I had not quite emotionally prepared myself for three hours of retelling of experiences of sexual assault. The hearing was incredibly powerful in detailing the failures of higher ed institutions to accommodate their students’ needs and oftentimes making the experiences of survivors worse. In addition, the most compelling argument I heard repeated many times from those who testified was the idea that if this bill had passed the first time it was introduced, the procedures and resources it mandates would have been in place when the speakers’ experiences of assault took place. On a more logistical level, this experience was also important in informing me how hearings take place, what the atmosphere is like and what a collective effort to civically engage looks like. I wish I could have been able to connect more with members of the Every Voice coalition who were present but socializing felt inappropriate during the testimony and Ethan and I had meetings scheduled all afternoon directly following the hearing.

Ethan

On meeting with Katia Santiago-Taylor, Boston-Area Rape Crisis Center

I think we had a very good meeting. Katia was very welcoming and showed us around the office before we sat down. She told us about her history with BARCC, explained her role as a registered lobbyist and how to lobby successfully, and even provided a number of valuable talking points. She very generously offered to have BARCC’s communications people look over our storybook and offer editing suggestions, although this never happened.

Even though before the meeting Emily and I were not really sure that we would get a lot out of it, we walked away feeling very good about it and like we had learned a lot. Connections made: Katia gave us names of lawmakers and an organization that it would be beneficial to push on the bill or to talk to about the bill.
Update
Since the hearing on April 9th, the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities in Massachusetts, the major opponent of the legislation, has stalled significant progress on the bill. The Every Voice Coalition is currently strategizing for the upcoming fall semester by planning how to combat ACIUM’s tactics and mobilize students when students return to campuses in August.

For more information

View the bill (MA legislature website):
S.764: https://malegislature.gov/Bills/191/S764
H.1209: https://malegislature.gov/Bills/191/H1209

Organization or Coalition support:
See Jane Doe Inc., http://www.janedoe.org/whats_happening/policy_action/