



HELP US TO PROTECT & STRENGTHEN VICTIM RIGHTS IN THE COMMONWEALTH!

MOVA, Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance, is working diligently to pass legislation that will strengthen the existing Victim Bill of Rights. This legislation, **Senate 1559, *An Act to Protect and Enhance the Rights of Child and Adult Victims and Witnesses of Crime***, has been referred to the Joint Committee on the Judiciary. The Committee will schedule a public hearing for the bill in the coming months. The hearing is a key opportunity to demonstrate broad, bi-partisan support for the legislation.

Your voices – from the front line of victim services – are the ones that will make the difference and ensure passage of this bill.

S.1559 Background:

- In 1984, when the Victim Bill of Rights was enacted, Massachusetts became the national leader in protection of victims of crime. In the 25 years that have passed, Massachusetts has fallen behind. It's been over a decade since the last comprehensive review and updates to the law.
- S.1559 reflects the feedback received from focus groups comprised of diverse stakeholders from across the state, including criminal justice agencies, law enforcement personnel, victim service providers and, most importantly, victims and survivors.
- S.1559, which has broad, bi-partisan support will, among many other things,
 - Ensure victims and witnesses in court have access to a separate and secure waiting area
 - Allow victims and witnesses who are children or who have disabilities to have a support person in the courtroom during their testimony and an orientation to the court process
 - Ensure broader notification of victim rights, including making rights available to non-English speaking victims and witnesses, and to families of victims in unsolved homicides
 - Require that a summary of victim rights be posted conspicuously in courthouses and police stations and that police notify victims of their rights

Please see our summary of the bill (visit www.mass.gov/mova to download it) for detailed information.

How You Can Help:

- * Contact your Senator and Representative by phone, e-mail, fax or US mail, and ask them to support S.1559. To find out who your local legislators are visit this site: www.wheredoivotema.com – or call/email MOVA for assistance (617-727-5200/Christopher.Klaskin@state.ma.us).
- * Meet with your legislators to help them understand the importance of S.1559 and to let them know their constituents support and are keeping track of this legislation.
- * We invite and strongly encourage you to submit written testimony in support of the bill to the Judiciary Committee. Share your own personal experiences and examples to highlight why you believe it is critical that Massachusetts adopt this bill. (Judiciary contact information can be found on other side)
- * Share information about S.1559 widely and sign on to the MOVA listserv for important updates and action alerts by emailing a blank message to: join-mova@listserv.state.ma.us.

Advocacy is easy and you already do it in everyday life. Advocating is simply informing other people of the benefits of your position. Reasonableness and listening are important skills you will need when advocating for an issue.

Make sure to be clear and stay on track if meeting with your legislator.

Be positive, concise, and respectful. This is an opportunity to personalize and relate your experiences with the issues. Be sure to express your gratitude for your legislator's time and support. Meeting with a member of their staff is extremely useful, as well.

Find out if your legislator supports the bill. If a legislator expresses support, get them to agree to convey their support to committee chairs and other people in leadership positions. If your Legislator is undecided, refer them to MOVA and let him/her know that you will be following-up on his/her stance as this bill is important to you.



If calling your Legislator:

Making a call is easy. A staff member will take your message and pass it to your legislator. You can say:

*"Hello, this is [your name]. I am a constituent from [your city/town]. I'm calling to urge Senator/Representative [last name] to support **Senate Bill 1559**, which would reinstate Massachusetts as a leader in the protection of victim rights. This bill is very important to me. Thank you for your time."*

Members of the Joint Committee on the Judiciary

Sen. Cynthia Stone Creem (D- First Middlesex and Norfolk)	617.722.1639
Sen. Steven Baddour (D- First Essex)	617.722.1604
Sen. Gale Candaras (D- First Hampden and Hampshire)	617.722.1291
Sen. Jack Hart (D- First Suffolk)	617.722.1150
Sen. Thomas McGee (D- Third Essex and Middlesex)	617.722.1350
Sen. Bruce Tarr (D- Essex and Middlesex)	617.722.1600
Rep. Eugene O'Flaherty (D- Chelsea)	617.722.2396
Rep. Speranzo (D- Pittsfield)	617.722.2396
Rep. James H. Fagan (D- Taunton)	617.722.2430
Rep. Colleen Garry (D- Dracut)	617.722.2380
Rep. Marie St. Fleur (D- Boston)	617.722.2030
Rep. John Fernandes (D- Milford)	617.722.2396
Rep. Katherine Clark (D- Melrose)	617.722.2220
Rep. James Dwyer (D- Woburn)	617.722.2014
Rep. Danielle Gregoire (D- Marlborough)	617.722.2080
Rep. Lewis Evangelidis (R- Holden)	617.722.2263
Rep. Daniel Webster (R- Pembroke)	617.722.2487

Additional Key Legislators to Send Your Support to:

Senate President Therese Murray	617.722.1500
House Speaker Robert A. DeLeo	617.722.2500
Lead Senate Sponsor, Senator Frederick Berry	617.722.1410
Lead House Sponsor, Rep. Peter J. Koutoujian	617.722.2220



If writing a letter of support to your Legislator:

Send copies of your letter to the **Chairs of the Joint Committee on the Judiciary:**

The Honorable Cynthia Stone Creem, Senate Chair
The Honorable Eugene O'Flaherty, House Chair
Joint Committee on the Judiciary
State House, Room 136
Boston, MA 02133