

**Remarks to the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce
(As prepared for delivery)**

Thank you. Good morning!

I last spoke to the Chamber as a candidate for Attorney General.

That day, I said that we needed the Attorney General's Office and the business community to work together to most effectively address the challenges we face.

From opiate abuse to civil rights, from energy costs to access to health care.

And I told you that I would work to build that partnership between you all here today and my office - the people's law firm.

Now we're just over 100 days into the job. And we're working hard on these issues and more.

I understand that any time there is a new Attorney General, there are going to be questions about how she is going to approach the business community.

I thought I'd start today by sharing that approach with you.

You deserve professional lawyering of the highest quality.

And you need predictability, practicality, and fairness from the Attorney General.

But that's not enough.

I expect an office that will be responsive, will collaborate, and will listen to you.

My direction to our team is that we are an office of problem solvers.

Our door will always be open. In fact, most of my leadership team is here today.

If you haven't met, please don't leave without getting at least one of their cards and setting up a call or a meeting.

We may not always agree on every issue, but we can always listen and learn from your expertise.

That is how I want the Attorney General's office to run – with business and everyone else.

I've also made changes in the office to create opportunities for collaboration with the business community, particularly around health care and energy.

I did this because I heard from you during the campaign.

In January, I restructured the office by creating two new bureaus, one for Health Care & Fair Competition and the other for Energy & Environment.

The Health Care and Fair Competition Bureau brings together for the first time under one roof all the divisions that drive our work in the health care space: Health Care, Antitrust, Medicaid Fraud, False Claims and our Nonprofits/Charities Division.

This new bureau will make our office a better partner for one of our most dynamic and critical industries, and the people that depend on it every day.

We understand the burden that rising health care costs place not just on families, but on your businesses.

I heard that loud and clear over the past year.

The Bureau will stronger position us to collaborate with the health care community on the wide range of public policy challenges confronting us - from cost containment and affordability, to mental health parity and access to substance abuse and mental health treatment.

And we're taking action on your behalf.

Working with members of the health care community, House Majority Leader Ron Mariano and I crafted legislation to help our office and the Health Policy Commission better watch out for health care consumers and control costs.

It's a simple change, but a meaningful one. It clarifies our office's ability to stop health care consolidations that lead to increased market dominance, higher prices, and more spending.

I'm proud to have worked closely with MAHP from the beginning and to publicly announce the support of two of our largest providers, Steward and Lahey.

In the coming weeks, we hope to earn the Chamber's support for the bill.

Because I know the cost of health care is one of your leading concerns, and I am serious about being part of the solution.

In the energy and environment space, our job is equally important.

The Attorney General's role is to advocate for energy ratepayers while safeguarding our natural resources and combating climate change.

Our business community and the public depend on us to do both.

During my campaign, I heard from manufacturers, clean energy leaders, low-income advocates, environmentalists, and utilities.

It's not a group of stakeholders that always agree.

But they all said we needed a new bureau that brought this work together. And that's exactly what we've done.

Our Energy and Environment Bureau's mission is to serve as a 21st century ratepayer advocate, by considering sustainability and ratepayer impacts together – at the ground floor.

That means fighting for greater rate transparency and encouraging a diverse range of energy sources.

It means raising net metering caps while ensuring fair allocation of distribution costs and advocating for all classes of ratepayers before state and federal regulators.

Many of you in this room have shared with me the burden that high energy costs have on your businesses.

I know that Massachusetts can't compete if our employers can't afford to do business here.

Health care and energy are critical to your success, and your success is critical to our economy and to the wellbeing of our communities and families.

I am confident that our renewed focus on these issues will make us a stronger partner for our industries and our residents.

And I am committed to working together on these issues.

As many of you know, the prescription drug and heroin epidemic is a top priority for our office.

I've spoken with so many of you about it. It touches your own families, your coworkers, and your employees.

Right now, in our state, heroin is claiming 2-3 lives a day.

And the vast majority of heroin users start by abusing prescription painkillers. Our use as a society is out of control.

We're less than 5% of the world's population but we consume 80% of the world's supply of opiates.

Our office is working hard to take this on by shutting down pill mills and drug traffickers, advocating for better health insurance coverage, and making Narcan – the overdose reversal drug – more affordable and more widely available to our communities and first responders.

But we can't do it alone, not our office, not law enforcement, not government.

We need you to help ensure that your employees have access to behavioral health care and to join our call for the funding we need to prevent abuse and to treat this disease.

Partnership between us can work. I've seen it.

A couple weeks ago, I went down to the Supreme Court to hear arguments in the marriage equality cases.

Years ago, when our office challenged the Defense of Marriage Act, we worked with the Chamber to put together a different kind of brief.

It simply said what you knew from your own companies – that equality isn't just good for our society, it's a smart business decision. It's what your employees and your customers wanted.

When the Supreme Court struck down DOMA, the brief they cited was your brief.

At the arguments the other day, again and again, the lawyers and the justices came back to the lessons in that brief.

I'm confident we're going to win this case!

And I think the Chamber deserves a round of applause for your role in getting us here.

Thank You

On other issues of workplace culture and equality, we in government can learn a lot from the business community, from everyone here in this room.

And I'm here to ask for your help on a top priority for my office, the issue of Equal Pay.

Seventy years ago, Massachusetts passed the country's first Equal Pay Act and became the first state to require equal pay for equal work. Seventy years ago, it became illegal to pay a woman less than a man for performing the same job.

But the simple vision of equal pay has proved hard to achieve. Wage disparities persist and they are significant.

In Massachusetts, women still only earn 80% of what men earn for doing the same job. The gap is even wider for mothers and women of color. We need to do better.

We need to do better because more than half of families nationwide depend on women's earnings.

And in 40% of families with children, women are the primary or sole breadwinner. When women's pay falls behind, these families fall behind.

We need to do better because this isn't a woman's issue. It's a core economic security challenge for our families and for our state.

This is also an issue that confronts women throughout their careers. Studies show that pay disparities begin at entry into the workforce and grow more exaggerated when women raise children – whether or not they take an extended leave of absence from work.

And they continue through retirement. Due to disparities in earnings during a career, Social Security and other retirement benefits are different for men and women when they leave the work force.

Many of you have led on this issue where government has lagged behind.

Your companies have competed to hire and retain the best workforce with generous parental leave plans, more flexible hours for working parents, and investments in telecommuting.

In the Attorney General's Office, we're working hard to catch up.

For the first time, we're instituting a six-week paid parental leave policy – available to all new parents, including parents who adopt or participate in foster care. It's not everything we need to do, but it's a step in the right direction.

We're reviewing the salaries of all 525 staff in the Attorney General's Office for any disparities in pay.

And we're also instituting new training for all our employees on unconscious bias.

I want to make sure that we eliminate potential for prejudice and stereotyping in our interactions with colleagues, clients, and the public we serve.

That's particularly important for a law enforcement office, but it's something to consider for your companies as well.

It's important to me that the Attorney General's Office be a model employer. How can I ask businesses to do something that we're not prepared to do ourselves?

But the problem of equal pay isn't going to be solved by some employers taking care to ensure their salaries are in line. We need a comprehensive approach.

Across Massachusetts – in the private and public sector.

One that gives all workers the tools they need to enforce their rights and helps employers to do the right thing.

To begin with, it's difficult to address a problem if you can't identify it and talk about it. We need greater transparency when it comes to salaries and wages.

We need to break the cycle of unequal pay.

Using only a job applicant's previous salary to set their future pay rate can perpetuate inequality.

But if we increase pay transparency and give employees and applicants more information about pay in their workplace, they'll be better armed to negotiate their own salaries.

And, we need an updated law. Under the current standards, it is simply too difficult to prove a claim even when clear disparities exist. We need streamlined rules of the road that make more sense to employers.

We also need to give people who discover they've been the victims of pay discrimination the time they need to bring a claim.

Fortunately, our state can make progress this year.

A large group of legislators, backed by the Women's Bar Association and the Equal Pay Coalition, have filed draft legislation that would improve our current law and address all of the barriers I just mentioned.

Increasing pay transparency, cracking down on deliberate discrimination, and fixing a state law that's been ineffective for too long.

So, I'm here today to ask the Chamber to join with me and the Coalition to update our Equal Pay law and to work together on the best piece of legislation we can write together.

Many of you have led on this issue and we need your help to get this done.

I'm very glad to be here today and I look forward to working with each of you in the year ahead.

Thank You.