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July 21, 2015

The Honorable James Eldridge
Senate Chair, Joint Committee on Financial Services
State House, Room 218
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Aaron Michlewitz
House Chair, Joint Committee on Financial Services
State House, Room 254
Boston, MA 02133

Re: H.B. 784, *An Act Providing for Equitable Coverage in Disability Policies*

Dear Chairman Eldridge and Chairman Michlewitz:

I am writing in support of H.B. 784, *An Act Providing for Equitable Coverage in Disability Policies*, filed by Representative Ruth Balser. This bill would prevent disability insurers from charging different rates or providing different benefits based on gender.

In Massachusetts, we have eliminated sex-based price disparities in annuities and auto insurance, homeowners insurance, and health insurance. I urge the Joint Committee to report favorably on this bill and extend gender neutrality to the sale of disability insurance. Such a law is long overdue.

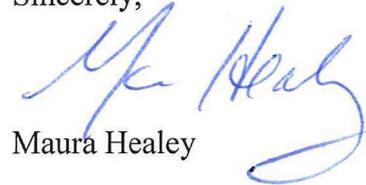
Disability insurance covers lost wages when the policyholder can no longer continue in her employment, due to a non-job-related accident or illness. The payouts can often help families or individuals stay afloat when they cannot work. It is unfair that women have to pay more to protect their income, and it is troubling that some may get priced out of a product that men can purchase more affordably. The price difference can be significant; women have been charged up to 70% more than men, even if other rating factors, such as age and occupational category, are exactly the same. This discrepancy harms women and all family members dependent on their income.

According to the U.S. Social Security Administration, one in four individuals will be disabled for some period before retirement. Women should have equal access to the financial protection from this unfortunate risk. Furthermore, gender-based rates in disability insurance are unnecessary. Similar products, like workers' compensation, are priced on a gender-neutral basis. Under ERISA, disability insurance offered through an employer must be priced equally for men and women.

Requiring gender neutrality across all lines of insurance has been a longstanding priority of this office, spanning multiple administrations. Allowing discrimination based on inherent traits like race and gender is wrong, and it harms families in this state. It is time to bring the practice of gender-based pricing discrimination to an end.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Benjamin Meshoulam, Senior Policy Advisor, at (617) 963-2601.

Sincerely,



Maura Healey

cc: The Honorable Ruth Balser