

Joint Committee on the Judiciary
Hearing on S.858
July 11, 2017
Testimony of Attorney General Maura Healey

Good afternoon Chairman Brownsberger, Chairwoman Cronin, and members of the Joint Committee, and thank you for the opportunity to be here today as you consider Senate Bill 858, *An Act to increase the penalties for corporate manslaughter*.

Let me start by thanking Senator Jen Flanagan, who has been a tireless advocate for working people in our state and has advocated for this bill with my office for many years.

As Attorney General, I have the privilege, the statutory obligation, and the solemn responsibility of ensuring that our workers and residents remain safe and our companies play by the rules.

Unfortunately, under our current manslaughter statute, some companies responsible for egregious crimes have gotten away with a slap on the wrist.

The current sentence for a person convicted of manslaughter is imprisonment up to 20 years and/or a \$1,000 fine.

But a corporation convicted of manslaughter – which of course cannot be imprisoned – faces only a fine of \$1,000, a limit set in 1819.

This 200-year-old law is in desperate need of an update with some real deterrence.

Under the proposed bill, the fine for corporate manslaughter would be raised to \$250,000 or more, and would allow a company to be disbarred from contracting with the state for up to 10 years.

More importantly, it will honor the memory of those we have lost – and help ensure others will not follow.

People like the two drain workers we lost in a trench last October in the South End ... the 77 lives lost as a result of contaminated steroids in 2012 ... and, of

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course, Milena Del Valle, the victim of the Big Dig ceiling panel collapse in 2006.

As you may remember, in past sessions we've gotten close to reforming this law.

In 2014, both the House and Senate voted unanimously to amend the statute, but the bill fell short of reaching the Governor's desk at the end of the legislative session.

I respectfully ask you to report S. 858 out of Committee favorably again this session, and let's prioritize getting this commonsense bill to the Governor this year.

It is time to make sure that it doesn't pay to cut corners and cost people their lives.

Thank you again for giving me the opportunity to speak with you today, and I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.