



Legislative Fact Sheet: Senate Bill No. 673

An Act Providing Employment Leave and Safety Remedies to Victims Of Domestic Violence, Stalking And Sexual Assault.

Lead Sponsors: Senator Cynthia Creem (D- 1st Norfolk & Middlesex)

Summary:

This legislation would protect employees who are victims of domestic violence, sexual assault or stalking from being penalized in the workplace for taking time off to address issues related to being a victim of such crimes and creates important model workplace safety and policy procedures for employers.

Relevant Specifics of the Act

Specifically An Act to Establish Employment Leave and Safety Remedies to Victims of Domestic Violence, Stalking and Sexual assault would amend M.G.L. c. 149 (Labor and Industries) by:

Proposing that any businesses that employ more than fifty employees, allow victims to take up to fifteen days of leave from work, with or without pay, if the employee, or a family or household member of such employee, is a victim of domestic violence, a victim of stalking, or a victim of a sexual assault.

Such leave would be used to address issues arising from domestic abuse, stalking, or sexual assault in order to seek or obtain a court order of protection, medical attention, counseling, victim services, and legal assistance, secure housing, or to appear in court as a witness, attend child custody proceedings, or consult with a district attorney or other law enforcement official.

Additionally, this legislation would develop a model workplace safety policy, training curriculum, and workplace safety procedures and protocols for employers in order to increase awareness, minimize the workplace risks, and help employers properly respond to employees who disclose.

JDI Position: Support

The research paints a clear picture:

- A 1997 national survey showed that 24 percent of women between the ages of 18 and 65 who had experienced domestic violence said that the abuse caused them to arrive late at work or miss days of work.
- A U.S. General Accounting Office review of three separate studies found that 44 to 60 percent of survey respondents said they had been reprimanded at work for behaviors related to the abuse.
- The same study also reported that between 24 to 52 percent of domestic violence victims surveyed reported they lost a job due, in part, to domestic violence.
- The Bureau of National Affairs has estimated that domestic violence costs employers \$3 to \$5 *billion* per year in lost days of work and reduced productivity.

JDI supports this legislation because we recognize not only the effect that domestic violence can have on the safety of victims in and outside of the workplace, but also on their ability to maintain a job- often the only access to economic stability. A victim of domestic violence, stalking or sexual assault should not be put in the position of having to choose between her immediate health and safety and her continued employment. Adoption of this legislation will help victims get the assistance they need without threatening the financial security and social support systems that their job provides.

For more information about this legislation or to sign on as co-sponsor, please contact the office of Senator Cynthia Creem at (617)722-1639 or Jane Doe Inc.'s Director of Policy and Systems Advocacy Isa Woldegiorgis at (617)557-1821.