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## **Stalking, Domestic and Sexual Violence Advocates Applaud Massachusetts Senate for addressing economic stability needs of victims and survivors**

(BOSTON, MA): After many years of advocacy, Jane Doe Inc., the Massachusetts Coalition Against Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence, is pleased that the Employment Leave Bill has passed in the Senate and is one step closer to becoming law.

Jane Doe Inc.'s Executive Director Mary R. Lauby explained why this bill has been one of JDI's priority legislative proposals, "Workplace protections are essential for survivors and victims of stalking, domestic and sexual violence to achieve economic stability and safety. Domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking can have a deleterious effect on the safety of victims in and outside of the workplace, but also on their ability to maintain a job--often their only access to economic stability."

Senate No. 918, officially entitled *An Act to establish employment leave and safety remedies to victims of domestic violence, stalking and sexual assault*, 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. In short, the bill will provide that:

- 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 sexual assault.
- leave could be used to address issues arising from domestic abuse, stalking, or sexual assault such as: obtaining a court order of protection; seeking medical attention, counseling, victim services, or legal assistance; securing housing; appearing in court as a witness; attending child custody proceedings; or consulting with a district attorney or other law enforcement official.

As detailed in JDI's July 14, 2011 [testimony](#) in support of this bill, the remedies provided acknowledge that violence can interfere with the victim's employment because of the need for time off from work to seek medical attention or attend court hearings or if the abuser is interfering with the victim's ability to work by preventing the victim from going to work, harassment at work or sabotaging other aspects such as transportation or child care.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Legal Momentum, *The Impact of Interpersonal Violence in the Workplace*, <http://www.legalmomentum.org/assets/pdfs/statistics.pdf> Retrieved 7/12/11

Lauby added, “To truly support victims in their efforts to separate from an abuser and to provide for themselves and their children, we must help change the dynamics so that a victim no longer has to choose between immediate health and safety and the financial security and social support systems that a job provides.”

As of 2010, at least fifteen states statutorily provided some form of employment rights specific to victims of sexual or domestic violence and many other states are considering such legislation.<sup>2</sup> JDI has made this bill a priority among our legislative efforts this year and has worked closely with the organization Employers Against Domestic Violence (EADV) and Senator Creem to bring these needed changes to the Commonwealth.

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For more information, please refer to JDI's [testimony](#) for more related facts and background on the costs for both victims and employers.

For a comment or analysis, please contact JDI's Policy Director Maureen Gallagher at 617-557-1808 or [mgallagher@janedoe.org](mailto:mgallagher@janedoe.org).

*Jane Doe Inc. (JDI) is the statewide advocacy coalition of 60 community based member agencies that provide direct services to sexual and domestic violence survivors throughout Massachusetts. JDI is a social change organization committed to addressing the root causes of sexual and domestic violence and promoting justice, safety, and healing for survivors.*

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<sup>2</sup> Legal Momentum [www.legalmomentum.org](http://www.legalmomentum.org)