

**Labor and Workforce Development Committee
Testimony in Support of Sen. 1130 and House 3788
An Act Establishing Paid Sick Days
May 4, 2005**

Chairman McGee, Chairman Rodrigues and Members of the Committee. My name is Ingrid Nava. I am a staff attorney at Greater Boston Legal Services and the Campaign Coordinator for the Massachusetts Paid Leave Coalition. Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I would also like to specifically thank Representative Jehlen for being the co-lead sponsor of House 3788 and Chairman McGee for cosponsoring Senate 1130.

Less than half of all workers in Massachusetts do not get a single paid sick day and this percentage increases for low-wage workers. Consequently, when children are ill, workers get sick, or elderly parents need help during work hours, a disturbingly large number of employees face an impossible choice between their income and the health and well-being of themselves and their family. However, the provision of paid sick days benefits not only workers and their families but also reduces public health expenditures and is cost effective and highly beneficial for employers.

This bill addresses this pressing need. In my testimony, I will provide you with a brief overview of the legislation. The Paid Sick Days bill provides 7 paid sick days to all full-

time employees so that they can take care of their own health and the health needs of their children, parents, spouse, and spouse's parents. Time off under the legislation is permitted for injury, illness or health condition or a routine medical appointment. These benefits are pro-rated for employees working less than 30 hours a week. An employer may require medical certification for an absence of more than three days and no more than 7 days of paid sick days may accrue in one year. If an employer has a paid leave policy that already provides paid sick days for the purposes and the number of days just described, then the employer has complied with the requirements of the bill. The bill, consistent with Massachusetts' wage and hour law, is enforced through existing mechanisms in the Office of the Attorney General.

Massachusetts is not alone in these efforts, and you have been provided with written submissions from sister coalitions around the country – California, that has succeeded in these efforts and other states where coalitions such as ours are making the case. An effort for paid sick days is also being led at the national level by our own Senator Kennedy.

For all the reasons that will be presented to you today, we urge a favorable report.