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DEVAL PATRICK
GOVERNOR

TIM MURRAY
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

Media Contact

Heather Johnson
Bonnie McGilpin
Juli Hanscom
617-725-4025

For Immediate Release - March 11, 2013

GOVERNOR PATRICK SIGNS SOCIAL WORKER SAFETY IN THE WORKFORCE LEGISLATION

BOSTON – Monday, March 11, 2013 – Governor Deval Patrick Friday signed Social Work Safety in the Workforce legislation that will further enhance Massachusetts' efforts to protect those who are caring for our most vulnerable residents.

The bill, originally signed into law on February 15, 2013, as part of the FY13 Supplemental Budget, requires all direct services providers who receive funding from the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (HHS) to provide workplace violence prevention and crisis response plans.

"This legislation offers vital safety protections to human service employees and social workers," said Senator Sal DiDomenico. "While it will not ameliorate the sorrow and suffering of previous tragedies that have occurred in the past, it will bring us closer to ensuring the safety of those workers who take care of our most vulnerable populations. I have to thank NASW for their leadership on this issue, Representative Sean Garballey for his partnership on this bill, and my colleagues in the Senate for their tremendous support, including Senate President Therese Murray."

"I am proud to have been able to partner with the National Association of Social

Workers and Senator DiDomenico on passing legislation that protects our social workers so they can continue to provide essential services to residents throughout the Commonwealth," said Representative Sean Garballey.

"Today marks a major advancement for the social work profession," said Carol Trust, Executive Director of the Massachusetts chapter of the National Association of Social Workers. "With the signing today of the social work safety in the workplace bill, Governor Patrick and the entire legislature have demonstrated their commitment to the profession and also to the clients and communities served by social workers."

"Social workers provide a crucial and fundamental service to residents of the Commonwealth," said Senator Michael Moore. "This legislation is critical to ensure the protection of social workers as they continue to provide services to our most vulnerable populations."

"Dedicated people serving clients in need shouldn't be exposed to the threat of harm, and this legislation creates the planning and resources to protect them," said Senator Bruce Tarr. "We will all be far better served by taking proactive steps to keep these professionals safe."

"Social workers are on the front lines working with families in crisis across the Commonwealth," said Representative Carolyn Dykema. "I'm proud to have cosponsored this legislation to help ensure that social workers working with the Commonwealth have a workplace prepared with a plan and training should violence arrive in their midst of this important work."

"Developing safety policies for social workers is important on so many levels, and I am very pleased with the passage of this bill," said Representative Thomas Stanley. "The legislation not only creates a critical environment of safety for our social workers, but also helps reduce staff burnout and improves employee retention."

Under the law, violence prevention and crisis response plans must be updated at least annually for social workers, human services workers, volunteers and all other employees. The legislation outlines the specifics of what prevention plans should include, and allows for HHS to offer additional training for employees.

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