



February 9, 2016

Women's Bar Association
27 School Street, Suite 500
Boston, MA 02108
Ph: 617.973.6666
Fax: 617.973.6663
www.womensbar.org

President
Kimberly Dougherty

President-Elect
Kristin W. Shirahama

**Vice President, Membership
& Statewide Outreach**
Michele Liu Baillie

Treasurer
Marie Chafe

Secretary
Bronwyn Roberts

Board of Directors
Meredith Ainbinder

Stefanie Balandis
Nancy Cremins
Kara DelTufo
Stesha Emmanuel
Nicole Forbes
Julie Lynch
Danielle McCourt
Michelle Peirce
Rebecca Pontikes
Patricia Rich
Camala Richardson
Jamie Sabino
Victoria Spetter
Brianna Sullivan
Donna Truex
Raquel Webster

Past Presidents
Pamela E. Berman
Hon. Patricia E. Bernstein
Beth L.Z. Boland
Lisa Brodeur-McGan
Martha Coakley
Kathy Jo Cook
Nancy Cremins
Kara DelTufo
Hon. Judith Nelson Dilday
Deborah DosSantos
Leigh-Ann Durant
Elaine Epstein
Lurleen Gannon
Hon. Wendie Gershengorn
Sally J. Greenberg
Julia Huston
Ellen C. Kearns
Karen J. Kepler
Marianne C. LeBlanc
Hon. Antoinette E.M. Leoney
S. Beville May
Sarah McClean
Melinda Milberg
Kathleen O'Connor
Michelle Peirce
Maureen M. Phillips
Patricia Rapinchuk
Mary K. Ryan
Jamie Ann Sabino
Terry Jean Seligmann
Jane E. Sender
Sandra Shapiro
Jane Tewksbury
Gretchen Van Ness
Sarah Wald

Executive Director
Patricia Comfort

**Membership &
Communications Manager**
Maura Bastarache

Operations Manager
Kimberly Phillips

Administrative Assistant
Elizabeth Yows-Johnson

Jennifer Flanagan
Senate Chair, Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities
State House, Room 312D
Boston, MA 02133

Kay Khan
House Chair, Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities
State House, Room 146
Boston, MA 02133

In Support of S107, An Act to Promote Employment

Dear Senator Flanagan and Representative Khan:

The Women's Bar Association of Massachusetts (WBA) supports Senate Bill 107, which will promote employment for parents receiving cash assistance for families (TAFDC) through the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA). The bill addresses skill-related barriers to employment by maximizing the use of existing education and training resources.

It is well known that in today's economy, stable jobs that can lift a family out of poverty require not only a high school diploma or HiSET, but at least some level of post-secondary education or training. Low-income single parents need jobs with predictable hours so that child care is available and so the parent can be home in the evening to help her child with homework, read to younger children, and provide all the care children need.

Increasing the use of existing education and training resources to serve parents receiving TAFDC is critical to increasing employment and the financial well-being of families currently in deep poverty. It also has critical impact on the children's future opportunities. Research continues to show that the educational attainment of the caretaker parent has the greatest impact on the child's academic success.

S107 requires in-depth assessment of barriers and, moreover, that the results of such assessment be used consistently in assisting parents who receive TAFDC. Program resources are wasted if parents do not receive appropriate information about viable career opportunities, the credentials needed, and available programs for which they qualify. The bill aims to prevent parents from being placed in programs that they cannot successfully complete or that do not improve their ability to get a job or to undertake a college-level vocational program. It also allows parents to count pre-college education and training to meet the TAFDC work requirement for up to 24 months, giving them more time to acquire the employment skills they need.

Finally, the bill addresses the fact that parents receiving TAFDC are not a homogenous group. It makes a difference whether the parent has a high school diploma or a 6th grade reading level. One size does not fit all. Therefore, the bill requires that, when deciding whether to grant extensions of benefits beyond 24 months, DTA consider whether more time is needed to complete education and training necessary for employment.

The WBA is a professional association of women attorneys and judges, with over 1,500 members across the state. The WBA was founded in 1978 and is one of the largest women's bar associations in the nation. Since 1978, everything the WBA has done has been guided by these simple words: We are committed to the full and equal participation of women in the legal profession and in a just society. The reality is that the vast majority of parents receiving welfare are mothers. Our organization's commitment to creating a just society for all its members and to advancing and protecting the interests of women and children compels us to support S107.

The WBA believes that the bill's pragmatic, common sense improvements to the TAFDC program will benefit thousands of families throughout Massachusetts. The WBA urges you to give a favorable report to S107 and to support its passage into law.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Dougherty
President

cc: Lisa Rosenfeld