



# The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

## House of Representatives

State House, Boston 02133-1054

May 30, 2017

Dear Colleagues:

With domestic assault continuing to be a leading cause of violence against women, we must do everything we can to provide safety measures to potential victims. That is why we are asking for your support on two critical pieces of legislation, *H.736* and *H.2492*.

These bills are designed to help decrease the potential of domestic violence. They are also intended to prevent those forced to defend themselves from being entangled in complex state laws that may cause them to face criminal charges. This actually happened recently in a case called *Caetano v. Massachusetts (2016)*. In this case, a woman with a protection order against an abuser was criminally charged for unlawful possession of a stun gun. *H.736, An Act Relative to Violent Protection Order Violations* requires the state to produce materials that would be provided to those who have successfully sought a protection order.

The materials would:

Explain the types of self-defense that are lawful in the Commonwealth

Any licenses or permits required for various means of defense

Where and how to obtain various tools for defense

Types and opportunities of training available

Situational awareness

When and how to notify authorities about potential protection order violations or threats.

The bill would also protect victims from being sued by their attackers. The bill is currently referred to the Joint Committee on the Judiciary and is tentatively scheduled for a hearing on Monday, June 5, 2017.

*H.2492, An Act Relative to Defensive Electric Devices* repeals a decades old ban on the sale of electronic self-defense devices in the Commonwealth, more commonly known as stun guns. This legislation makes them available for public purchase without a license, as is the case with the majority of the country. This bill was filed as a result of the United States Supreme Court ruling in *Caetano v. Massachusetts (2016)* that the state's ban on stun guns is unconstitutional and antiquated. The bill is currently before the Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security.

Stories of protection order holders being brutally injured or worse are far too common. There is a critical difference between feeling safe and being safe, and we can do more to prevent violence and needless prosecution of victims.

Please join us by signing on to a joint letter of support for these critical pieces of legislation and asking the committees to release these bills favorably as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Rep. Colleen Garry (D-Dracut)

Rep. Kate Campanale (R-Leicester)