

Massachusetts Senator Warren Urges President Biden to Swiftly Deschedule Marijuana

“(T)he DEA should deschedule marijuana altogether. Marijuana’s placement in the Controlled Substances Act has had a devastating impact on our communities and is increasingly out of step with state law and public opinion.”

U.S. Senators Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) and John Fetterman (D-Pa.), led nine of their Democratic colleagues, including U.S. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.), in sending a letter to U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland and U.S. Drug Enforcement (DEA) Administrator Anne Milgram, urging them to remove marijuana from Schedule I of the Controlled Substances Act (CSA). The letter comes after an August 2023 recommendation from the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) that marijuana be rescheduled from Schedule I to Schedule III. The senators are calling for a complete descheduling of marijuana, consistent with state law, public sentiment, and the need to eliminate criminal and civil penalties for marijuana use.

This letter is also signed by Senators Cory Booker (D-N.J.), Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.), Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.), Ron Wyden (D-Ore.), John Hickenlooper (D-Colo.), Peter Welch (D-Vt.), Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.), and Alex Padilla (D-Calif.).

“We write to urge the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) to swiftly deschedule marijuana from the Controlled Substances Act (CSA),” wrote the senators. “(R)escheduling to Schedule III would mark a significant step forward, (but) it would not resolve the worst harms of the current system. Thus, the DEA should deschedule marijuana altogether. Marijuana’s placement

in the CSA has had a devastating impact on our communities and is increasingly out of step with state law and public opinion.”

In August 2023, HHS recommended moving marijuana to a less restrictive DEA schedule. This followed an October 2022 directive from President Biden requiring HHS and the Department of Justice (DOJ) to review the current scheduling of the drug. Prior to this review, the last review of marijuana scheduling occurred in 2016, when HHS ultimately recommended keeping marijuana under Schedule I. Now, HHS has identified credible scientific support for marijuana’s medical uses and has reversed its position. The medical science, as well as developments in state law and international law, support removing marijuana from Schedule I.

The Senators were clear about the need to completely deschedule the drug: “Rescheduling would do little to rectify the most severe harms of the current system... (The) criminal penalties for recreational marijuana use, and for medical use of marijuana products that lack federal approval, would still exist, disproportionately penalizing Black and Brown communities. Similarly, non-citizens could still be denied naturalization and green cards, and even deported, based on recreational marijuana use and most marijuana offenses,” the senators continued. “Furthermore, rescheduling marijuana would not restore access to public housing or nutrition assistance for individuals who use marijuana recreationally or engage in other marijuana activity against federal law,”

“These harms could be remedied only through fully descheduling marijuana. The Biden Administration has a window of opportunity to deschedule marijuana that has not existed in decades and should reach the right conclusion – consistent with the clear scientific and public health rationale for removing marijuana from Schedule I, and with the imperative to relieve the burden of current federal marijuana policy on ordinary people and small businesses,” concluded the senators.

The senators have requested that the DEA and DOJ provide more information on steps taken to act on HHS's rescheduling recommendation no later than February 12, 2024.

Senator Warren has long fought to reform cannabis policy and provide justice to individuals currently and formerly incarcerated for cannabis-related offenses:

In November 2023, Senators Warren, Merkley, Raphael Warnock (D-Ga.) and U.S. Representative Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.) led 16 lawmakers in a letter to Secretary of the Treasury Janet Yellen and Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN) Director Andrea Gacki, asking FinCEN to update its out-of-date guidance on marijuana-related businesses to promote fairness in financial services for marijuana businesses operating in states where marijuana is no longer illegal.

In May 2023, at a hearing of the Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee, Senator Warren highlighted the need for the Secure and Fair Enforcement (SAFE) Banking Act, which would create a safe harbor from prosecution, asset forfeiture, or other liability for financial institutions that serve cannabis businesses, as a critical step toward helping cannabis businesses access safe banking services and protecting workers from the safety risks of working in cash-only businesses.

In December 2022, Senator Warren and Representative Blumenauer led a bipartisan and bicameral group of lawmakers in a letter urging the Biden-Harris Administration to deschedule marijuana.

In July 2022, Senators Warren and Sanders led a letter to President Biden, Attorney General Merrick Garland, and Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra, following up on previous requests that the administration use its authority to deschedule cannabis and pardon non-violent cannabis-related offenders.

In November 2021, Senators Warren, Markey, and Merkley sent a letter to President Biden urging him to use his authority to pardon all individuals convicted of federal non-violent cannabis offenses.

In October 2021, Senators Warren and Booker urged Attorney General Merrick Garland to decriminalize cannabis by removing the drug from the list of federally controlled substances.

In March 2021, Senators Warren, Merkley, and Steve Daines (R-Mont.) cosponsored the bipartisan SAFE Banking Act to ensure that legal cannabis businesses have access to critical banking services.

OPINION: “A comparison between MAGA rallies and Nazi rallies is easy to make!”

The following is an opinion sent to New Bedford Guide. It does not reflect the opinion of New Bedford Guide, nor is it an OP-ED. In fairness and objectivity, we share opinions from our readers whether we agree or disagree with their opinion.

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“The streaming services are chock full of World War Two documentaries, dramatic movies and all with startlingly graphic pictures of the Nazi atrocities. And included in so many of these depictions are newsreel footage of millions of

civilians saluting Hitler.

Undoubtedly, and secretly, many Germans despised Hitler and his effect upon their democracy, but had to feign support for this monstrous dictator. However, millions of Germans were willing to sacrifice their freedom and publicly proclaim their unyielding support for a man with grandiose visions of world domination and the total annihilation of all non-aryan, non-heterosexual and disabled people.

Thousands of books and articles have interpreted this adoring reaction of so many clearly educated Germans who willingly dispensed with their democratic freedoms. Perhaps the most accurate explanation is that freedom of expression and movement is frightening to people, and as a result they willingly forfeit their liberty and yearn for a return to being collectively governed by dictators, kings, and tribal leaders. The lure of an inclusive existence is comforting especially in the absence of economic stability.

When one watches a MAGA rally with red hatted Americans, who swoon, laugh and display rage at anyone who espouses equality or diversity, the comparison to Nazi rallies is easily perceived.

Is it the grievances or the fear of freedom that is the motivating force that we are observing? Or are these really the same human reaction? As freedom is threatening and grievances provide the unifying element that makes Trump and similar politicians so attractive to millions in America and other once democratic nations. Perhaps the reality of freedom has proven too contrary to the human need for security and inclusiveness.”-Betty Ussach, Dartmouth.

In Boston Business Address, Healey Touts Investment, Spending Restraint

By Sam Drysdale

State House News Service

Months after a coalition of regional business chambers warned Beacon Hill politicians to rein in spending, Gov. Maura Healey pitched her new state budget recommendation to members of the state's business community on Thursday as "balanced" and "responsible."

The governor's budget, unveiled on Wednesday, relies on a number of new recurring, multi-year or one-time revenues to finance new spending initiatives, since tax collections have slowed and come in below projections so far in fiscal 2024.

Despite slower revenue growth on the horizon, Healey made a point to note that she does not plan to raise taxes.

"After working hard to make our state more competitive, we will not be introducing new taxes or tax increases," she said, to applause from those in attendance at the Associated Industries of Massachusetts (AIM) event in Newton.

She and legislative leaders have said they have no appetite to raise state taxes to cover spending priorities, though Healey did introduce a bill last week that would allow municipalities to increase certain hospitality taxes and establish a 5 percent local surcharge on vehicle owners, who already pay a local vehicle excise tax.

AIM President and CEO Brooke Thompson celebrated the tax cuts that Healey signed into law last year, but the business group also wants to see more done in the way of tax reform.

AIM, the largest business group in the state, supports reducing the short-term capital gains tax to 5 percent (last year's tax package cut it from 12 percent to 8.5 percent), joining every other New England state in exempting rolling stock tractors, trailers and rail cars from the sales tax, and allowing deductions for business interests, Thompson said in her State of Massachusetts Business speech this month.

Healey didn't touch on any of these tax policy priorities during her speech on Thursday, but pitched her housing bond bill and new child care plan as business-friendly initiatives.

The governor also did not touch on a question mark hovering around the heads of the state and businesses – an unresolved error that may mean Massachusetts owes \$2.5 billion back to the federal government, which was misused during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thompson brought up the topic in her business address as one of AIM's main priorities this year.

"AIM strongly supports a swift resolution to the \$2.5 billion deficit hanging over the state's unemployment system," she said. "Business should not be saddled with additional taxes because Massachusetts incorrectly utilized federal relief funds to pay for jobless claims during the pandemic."

As for her housing bill, the governor promoted a new University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute report on the potential impact of her \$4.1 billion bill, which is meant to make housing more affordable and accessible as a lack of options pushes people out of the state.

The report said the housing bill would produce tens of thousands of new homes across the state and stimulate nearly \$25 billion in economic activity, create 30,000 jobs and generate roughly \$1 billion in combined state and local tax revenue.

“The analysis – and again this isn’t me speaking, this is the Donahue Institute speaking – it highlights an opportunity, they say, to create upward mobility for more residents. Ramping up housing production will require growing the construction industry with more firms and more workers,” Healey said.

The Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities, which Healey oversees, commissioned the study to estimate the impact of the housing bond bill on the state’s economy. It estimates the total public and private spending associated with the full implementation of the bill to be \$15.1 billion over five years, and that it would create a \$24.8 billion total economic impact in the same time span.

Thompson said the business group supports the “overarching objectives” of the governor’s housing bill, and particularly supports the acceleration of development near public transit.

In addition to injecting billions of dollars into housing production, the bill also includes policy changes such as enabling communities to enact local option transfer fees to pay for affordable housing and lowering the threshold for zoning reform.

A spokesperson for AIM said their “broad” support for the bill does not mean their members necessarily endorse every aspect of it.

“Almost every Massachusetts employer has heard from an employee at one time or another saying, ‘I’d love to come to work here, or I’d love to stay here, but I can’t afford to raise my family here,’” Thompson said in her State of Massachusetts Business address.

The Greater Boston Business Chamber and the Massachusetts Business Roundtable have also supported the so-called Affordable Homes Act.

Healey also pitched her administration's new early childhood education and care proposals, saying that the state's high cost of living hit workers with children particularly hard.

The governor's plan includes an expansion to the universal preschool program into all 26 "gateway cities" by 2026, making more low- and moderate-income families eligible for child care assistance, funding another year of the Commonwealth Cares for Children (C3) grants, and filing an executive order calling for a "whole-of-government" approach to boosting access to child care.

"We know we can reduce the costs for thousands of families. We can help women – thank you for the pink slip initiative – we can help women return and stay in the workforce, and we can importantly achieve the kind of high-quality education and care for our kids that they so deserve," Healey said Thursday.

The governor also announced a new executive order she signed on Thursday, under which state agencies will no longer specify a minimum level of education when they look to hire new employees.

"Massachusetts is in the midst of a transition to a skills-based economy, in which demand for skilled employee talent is at an all-time high, and employers are seeking to broaden and strengthen their talent pipelines by prioritizing individual skills over traditional credentials like degrees," the order says.

Her announcement was met with applause on Thursday, and she encouraged business leaders to adopt similar practices.

Healey said the state needs to shift to a "skills-based economy," and that hiring practices just based on a degree "reduces people to a line on a resume."

"We know how difficult it remains to fill open positions – and frankly, as the state's largest employer, we face this

challenge as well,” Healey said. “Massachusetts has the highest percentage of working-age adults with a four-year degree, at around 50 percent. We can be proud of that. But the other half of our workforce also makes immense contributions to our economy. Yet too often, job postings – both in the public and private sectors – call for a degree as a minimum requirement, even when that degree is not necessary to perform well in the role. That creates a barrier for both employers and workers alike.”

Tonja Mettlach, executive vice president of the Mass Business Roundtable, sent out a statement commending the move to “[rethink] hiring practices and [be] creative about how we recruit, retain, and invest in talent.”

Absentee, mail-in ballots available in New Bedford for March Presidential Primary

“NEW BEDFORD – The New Bedford Election Commission is making available absentee and mail-in ballots for the March 5 Presidential Primary election.

Any registered voter can request to receive a mail-in or absentee ballot by visiting the Election Commission office at City Hall, 133 William St., during business hours, Monday-Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Request forms have been mailed to registered voters in New Bedford.

If the request form is being mailed back to the Election Commission office, it must be received by Feb. 27 at 5 p.m. Forms can also be returned in person at the office until March

4 at 12 p.m. Request forms, and an online tool to submit a request, are also available on the Mass. Secretary of State's website,

<https://www.sec.state.ma.us/divisions/elections/voting-information/vote-by-mail.htm>.

All completed absentee or mail-in ballots must be returned to the Election Office by 8 p.m. on Election Day, March 5, to be counted. They can be mailed back, hand delivered to the Election Commission Office at City Hall, or placed in the drop-off boxes outside City Hall or on Elm Street by the bus terminal.

In the Presidential Primary on Tuesday, March 5, New Bedford voters may cast their vote for president, state committee man, state committee woman, and ward committee.

Early in-person voting for the primary begins on Feb. 24. More information about early voting schedule and locations is forthcoming.

Any New Bedford resident who is uncertain about their voting status, designated polling location, has changed their address since the last election, or has other questions about the election can contact the Board of Election Commissioners at 508-979-1420."-City of New Bedford.

Man facing aggravated child rape charges sentenced in

Boston for illegally entering the US after deportation

A Guatemalan man was sentenced today in federal court in Boston for illegally reentering the United States after deportation.

Marcelino De Leon Yoc, a/k/a "Eric Pineda Hernandez," 32, was sentenced by U. S. District Court Judge Richard G. Stearns to time served (approximately five months) and one year of supervised release. In October 2023, Yoc pleaded guilty to one count of unlawful reentry of a deported alien.

According to the charging documents, De Leon Yoc was removed from the United States on May 12, 2018. De Leon Yoc unlawfully reentered the United States sometime after his May 2018 removal. On Aug. 24, 2023, De Leon Yoc was arrested by immigration authorities in Lynn, Mass.

According to court filings, De Leon Yoc is also facing charges in Suffolk County Superior Court for aggravated rape of a child, indecent assault and battery on a person over 14 and trafficking of a person for sexual servitude.

Acting United States Attorney Joshua S. Levy and Todd M. Lyons, Field Office Director, Boston, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Enforcement and Removal Operations made the announcement today. Assistant U.S. Attorney John J. Reynolds III of the Major Crimes Unit prosecuted the case.

Video captures migrants being housed and sleeping on floor inside Boston's Logan Airport

Roughly 100 migrants are currently sleeping on the floor while being housed inside Boston's Logan Airport. In a video going viral on Twitter, you can see rows of families, many with small children, camped inside terminal E.

BREAKING: Illegals are now being housed at Logan airport, Boston

The Governor previously asked citizens to take illegals into their homes

*MA is the only state with a right-to-shelter law which means the state must provide shelter for anyone who needs it.
pic.twitter.com/s8FiTLr7xU*

– Libs of TikTok (@libsoftiktok) January 24, 2024

WBZ News spoke with Governor Maura Healey at a press conference where she stated, "The airport has been a wonderful partner and I really want to thank the folks at the airport who are doing a wonderful job including members of the state police who are working their regular shifts but who are managing the inflow and outflow of folks from the airport."

WBZ also reported, "Those staying at the airport have been leaving on buses in the morning and coming back to sleep there at night."

Elon Musk commented on the situation as well.

What happens when the airport is full?

– Elon Musk (@elonmusk) January 24, 2024

Governor Healey asked for an additional \$250 million in funds to address the crisis this year, while her office estimates the crisis could cost Massachusetts **\$915 million next year.**

Governor Healey bill would allow increased taxes for food, hotels and vehicles in New Bedford, Fall River and other Massachusetts communities

Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey filed a bill on Monday that would allow cities and towns to increase taxes on meals, lodging, and vehicles.

Per **Boston.com**:

“The bill gives municipalities the option to increase their hotel, motel, and other rental tax from 6% to 7% (or half a percentage higher for Boston), and their meal tax from the set .75% to 1%. The bill would also let cities and towns increase their motor vehicle excise tax by 5%.”

As Massachusetts residents see their rents/mortgages and other necessity costs almost double since 2020, 2024 is likely to see higher property taxes and increased taxes on their

vehicles, hotels, and eating out. Higher home values, increased interest rates since 2020, and a surge in migrants to Massachusetts in 2023 are mostly responsible. The Governor Healy administration estimates **the cost of the state's emergency shelter system fueled in part by new migrant arrivals will cost more than \$900 million annually in fiscal 2024 and in fiscal 2025.**

This higher shelter cost is due to Massachusetts having a 'Right to Shelter' law that provides hotels, health care, and other social services and a record surge of illegal immigration due to President Biden's weak border policy. Per **CBS News**: "Border Patrol has processed more migrants who entered the U.S. illegally in December than in any other month in the agency's history."

Massachusetts Governor Healey, Eight Other Democrat Governors Push D.C. On Immigration

Chris Lisinski
State House News Service

Gov. Maura Healey joined eight counterparts from other states in a new plea for federal immigration action, including funding to support states that have spent billions of dollars placing new migrant arrivals into emergency shelters.

Nine governors, all Democrats who collectively represent more than 100 million Americans, wrote to President Joe Biden and

Congressional leaders from both parties Monday urging them to “work together to solve what has become a humanitarian crisis.”

The governors said global migration is at a “historic high,” driving sharp increases in new arrivals to cities and states that “lack the vast coordinated infrastructure needed to respond to the humanitarian and public safety concerns of those seeking lawful entry into the United States.”

They said a \$106 billion supplemental funding request Biden proposed last year would offer “a minimum level of funding and actions” needed to address the issues.

“While political motivations continue to delay the negotiations, our economy, states and localities are bearing the brunt of the shortcomings of the existing immigration system,” the governors wrote. “Therefore, as you return to Washington to resume work on critical federal funding measures, we strongly urge Congress and the Administration to quickly negotiate an agreement on a border security legislative package that includes federal coordination and decompression at the southern and northern borders; federal funding for both border and interior states and cities receiving new arrivals; and a serious commitment to modernizing our immigration system in the United States.”

In Massachusetts, the Healey administration estimates a record level of demand on the state’s emergency shelter system fueled in part by new migrant arrivals will cost more than \$900 million annually in fiscal 2024 and in fiscal 2025.

Healey said in her State of the Commonwealth speech last week she would “continue to demand that Congress take action to fix the border, to get us funding.” Asked last week to elaborate on what border fixes Healey supports, a spokesperson said the governor backs Biden’s supplemental budget request and linked to a fact sheet the White House produced in October.

Healey and fellow governors then doubled down on their support of the supplemental funding proposal in their new letter Monday.

“This is not a problem that Massachusetts created. However, it’s a problem that we’re having to deal with right now,” Healey said Monday, echoing a line that she used in her State of the Commonwealth speech last week.

House Ways and Means Committee Chair Aaron Michlewitz suggested in a television interview that aired Sunday that Massachusetts might only receive \$40 million to \$50 million in migrant-related funding under Biden’s proposal, a small amount compared to the projected amount of state spending on shelter.

Massachusetts Ballot Law Commission Tosses Trump Primary Ballot Challenge

By Alison Kuznitz
State House News Service

A Massachusetts panel on Monday unanimously denied an effort to remove former President Donald Trump’s name from the Republican presidential primary ballot.

The State Ballot Law Commission dismissed a challenge that alleged Trump is ineligible for office due to his role in the Jan. 6, 2021 attack on the U.S. Capitol, ruling that it does not have jurisdiction over the case.

Four days after an attorney for Trump contended that the former president has not yet been nominated under

Massachusetts law and that the objectors failed to comply with notice requirements, the panel made similar points in a 10-page decision that turned away the challenge.

“The Commission, having reviewed the materials submitted, has determined that the State Ballot Law Commission does not have jurisdiction over the matters presented,” the panel wrote.

In a footnote, commissioners added that even if they had determined they had jurisdiction, the challenges filed by parties including Free Speech for People and civil rights firm Lichten & Liss-Riordan failed to notify other Republican presidential candidates on the ballot or the state Republican Party, “thereby subjecting them to dismissal.”

The groups, who were represented last week by former Democratic U.S. Senate and attorney general candidate Shannon Liss-Riordan, had argued that Trump is ineligible to appear on the ballot because the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution bans anyone who under an oath of office has “engaged in insurrection or rebellion.”

Commissioners said their ability to address challenges about presidential candidates is “limited in scope.”

“Donald Trump’s name will not be appearing on the presidential primary ballot as a result [sic] the submission of nomination papers or a certificate of nomination over which the Commission does have jurisdiction,” they wrote in their decision. “Rather, Donald Trump’s name will appear on the presidential primary ballot as a result of the Republican State Committee’s submission of his name to the Secretary of the Commonwealth on September 29, 2023 pursuant section 70E of chapter 53 of the General Laws. This submission from the state party should not be confused with a ‘certificate of nomination’ referenced in sections 4 and 5 of chapter 55B.”

All three current members of the panel – retired Judge Francis T. Crimmins Jr., Joseph Eisenstadt and former Sen. Joe Boncore

– signed the decision.

Secretary of State William Galvin oversaw a drawing on Jan. 2 setting the order of names appearing on the March 5 presidential primary ballot, including Trump's. Galvin's office has said that ballots went to print immediately after the drawing.

Elections officials in other states have also been pressed to consider Trump's eligibility in the light of the attack that sought to overturn Joe Biden's victory in the 2020 presidential election.

The Colorado Supreme Court ruled last month that the Fourteenth Amendment deems Trump ineligible, and the case will soon go before the U.S. Supreme Court with oral arguments scheduled for Feb. 8.

Massachusetts Health Care Coverage Bill For Undocumented Kids Would Cost \$166 Million

By Alison Kuznitz
State House News Service

Warning undocumented children cannot wait another legislative session before potentially gaining access to government-sponsored health insurance coverage, Sen. Sal DiDomenico looked to drum up support for his proposal Thursday before a large crowd of health care advocates who visited Beacon Hill

to lobby lawmakers.

Some 40,000 children and young adults under age 21 who meet eligibility criteria for MassHealth but lack coverage due to their immigration status could secure coverage under bills from DiDomenico and Rep. Dave Rogers (S 740 / H 1237), a DiDomenico aide said.

Without any dissenting votes, the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing reported the bills out favorably in October to the Senate Ways and Means Committee, where Democrats last session took no further action on the so-called "Cover All Kids Act."

"We can't wait two more years to file this bill again because a whole group of children are not going to have access to health care, or eye glasses, hearing aids, wheelchairs, medication," said DiDomenico (D-Everett).

The renewed advocacy comes as Massachusetts continues to deal with a flood of new arrivals seeking emergency shelter here, with state costs expected to hit \$1 billion this fiscal year and next year.

Expanding MassHealth coverage to eligible, undocumented youth under 21 would cost more than \$100 million. Suzanne Curry, director of policy and government relations at advocacy group Health Care for All, has pegged the price at \$112 million with about 31,000 children enrolling and \$166 million with about 48,000 children enrolling.

Asked whether the state could afford the MassHealth expansion given the recent weak growth in tax collections, DiDomenico said the budget encompasses the state's values.

"If we're trying to provide health care for our kids and make sure that we pick up the most vulnerable among us, this is the bill. So if we say government works for everybody in the state, then this bill will prove that, and you know, the cost

in my mind is something we can absorb,” DiDomenico told the News Service.

He added, “If you don’t agree with giving them health care, then the other side of this is it’s costing you more in the long run for not providing these things upfront. For folks that say we don’t want to explore this possibility, we are paying for it many times over in a different way, and so the cost that we put upfront is actually less than the burden on our health care system than it would be otherwise.”

Existing state law denies MassHealth coverage to most undocumented youth, said Attorney General Andrea Campbell, who estimated that population at between nearly 30,000 to 50,000 individuals. Massachusetts and New Hampshire are the only New England states that haven’t expanded state health insurance access for all children, Campbell said.

“Sadly, children requiring urgent and essential medical treatment, either due to complex disabilities or other significant health care needs, don’t have access to the very things that will save their life, or at least give them everything they need to thrive, simply due to circumstances outside of their control due to the immigration status of their families,” Campbell said.

The economics of the legislation is a “no-brainer,” the attorney general said, asserting that the state will benefit from health care savings due to fewer emergency room visits, hospitalizations and disability benefit payments.

Dr. Alexandra Santana Almansa, a neurology fellow at Boston Children’s Hospital, recounted how a young boy was repeatedly admitted to the hospital after he couldn’t obtain epilepsy medicine to prevent seizures.

“It wasn’t a rare medication – it was medication that we use in many of our patients,” she said. “But because of his immigration status, he was not able to get the medication that

he needed.”