



walkBoston

May 11, 2009

The Hon. James B. Eldridge, Senate Chair
The Hon. Paul J. Donato, House Chair
Joint Committee on Municipal and Regional Government
State House
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Senator Eldridge and Representative Donato:

WalkBoston is Massachusetts' leading pedestrian advocacy organization working to make everyday walking safer and more convenient across the state. With members in more than 60 communities, and more than 70 corporate and organizational members, we speak for a very broad constituency of walkers. We write in support of House Bill 3588, which is currently before your committee.

Rep. Vincent Pedone of Worcester sponsored the bill which is a re-file of the municipal fines legislation that was enacted by the Legislature last year, but was vetoed by the Governor. H3588 no longer includes the provision that the Governor opposed, but continues to provide important benefits for communities, and for pedestrians. WalkBoston hopes that the Committee on Municipal and Regional Government acts swiftly and favorably on H3588, so that it can be enacted and signed early in this new session.

WalkBoston is specifically in favor of Section 5 of the bill, which would allow cities and towns, by local option, to develop a snow and ice removal policy for their sidewalks, and to set fines at a level that will encourage compliance with those requirements. WalkBoston is greatly focused on improving pedestrian safety and year-round mobility. Every step that can be taken to improve Massachusetts' sidewalk snow and ice clearance is needed. We work with both local and state partners who are equally concerned with the hazards that un-cleared and icy sidewalks pose to all Massachusetts residents, but most especially to elders, the disabled, and children who are walking to and from school.

Last winter saw several fatalities of pedestrians who were walking in the street because sidewalks were impassable, and hospitals reported many emergency room visits due to falls on snowy and icy sidewalks. WalkBoston has long promoted local sidewalk snow and ice clearance policies as a means of ensuring pedestrian safety during New England's snowy winters, and we are very pleased that the legislature is taking steps to assist in this effort. We urge you to act favorably on H3588.

Thank you, and please contact me if you would like any further information on this issue.

Sincerely,

Wendy Landman
Executive Director

Cc Rep. Vincent Pedone, Rep. Denise Provost, Rep. Marty Walz