

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Contact: Michael Avitzur

July 29, 2011
(617) 722-1639

CREEM BILL ON WRONGFUL CONVICTIONS PASSED BY SENATE

(State House, Boston) The State Senate gave unanimous approval to a bill filed by Senator Cynthia Stone Creem (D/Newton) to provide expanded access to DNA and other forensic evidence for persons who maintain they have been wrongfully convicted of a crime. If enacted, Massachusetts would become the 49th state to guarantee the right to post-conviction forensic testing.

“It is time for the Commonwealth to step into the 21st century on this issue,” said Senator Creem. “Not only would this law protect the wrongfully convicted, but it is equally important to remember that for each wrongfully-convicted person behind bars, there is a real criminal out on the loose.”

A panel of the Boston Bar Association -- consisting of academics and defense attorneys, as well as prosecutors, former judges, and law-enforcement -- released a report on wrongful convictions in 2009, throwing its support behind Senator Creem’s approach.

The bill contains procedural requirements to ensure that only deserving claims are heard. The final decision on whether to order testing rests with a judge.

“We owe this to the innocent people behind bars in this state, and to their families. We also owe it to the victims of these crimes, because there can be no justice and no real closure so long as the true culprits go unpunished.”

According to The Innocence Project, there have been 273 exonerations nationwide on the basis of post-conviction testing of DNA evidence, including 9 who were wrongfully convicted in Massachusetts.

The bill is now awaiting further action in the State House of Representatives.

###