

# MBA NEWS

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## MASSACHUSETTS BAR ASSOCIATION SUPPORTS CRIMINAL SENTENCING REFORM PACKAGE

BOSTON, Mass. —The Massachusetts Bar Association supports major sentencing reform legislation presented by the Joint Committee on the Judiciary last night. The House is set to debate this package as early as today. Proposed reform includes several positive provisions endorsed by the MBA, including limits to the school zone statute, changes to the Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) system and increased rehabilitation and post-release programs.

“This legislation is the first of a series of necessary victories for the state of Massachusetts to significantly improve its failing criminal justice system,” MBA President David W. White Jr. said. “If passed, these changes will help to reduce crime and save money while also restoring families and communities.”

The current sentencing system commands a budget approaching \$1 billion, has resulted in more than 25,000 incarcerated residents, and less drug treatment and work training programs.

“The MBA hopes further reforms will be added to the legislation as amendments. It is important to include parole opportunities for individuals serving mandatory minimum sentences,” White said. “Parole should be available for inmates who have completed at least two-thirds of their sentence in prison or half their sentence in houses of corrections.”

Included in the reform package to be debated by the House are the following positive provisions:

- Limiting the school zone statute to second and subsequent drug possession of distribution offenses and shrinking the geographic zone from 1,000 feet to 100 feet;
- Increasing fines for misuse of CORI records from \$500 to \$5,000 as well as decreasing the mandatory waiting period for individuals seeking to seal criminal records from 15 to 10 years for felonies and from 10 years to five years for misdemeanors, as long as the individual has not committed any new crimes;
- Providing support and rehabilitation programs presently unavailable to individuals serving mandatory minimum drug sentences; and
- Creating a post release supervision pilot project for inmates who serve more than one year in a house of correction or state prison.

The MBA has played a key role in criminal sentencing reform over the past several years, holding a Sentencing Symposium in the Statehouse in October, having its leaders testify before the committee on bills related to CORI and sentencing reform over the past year, and in 2006 voting to adopt a report recommending several changes to CORI.

*Incorporated in 1911, the Massachusetts Bar Association is a non-profit organization that serves the legal profession and the public by promoting the administration of justice, legal education, professional excellence and respect for the law. The MBA represents a diverse group of attorneys, judges and legal professionals across the commonwealth.*