



American Academy of Sleep Medicine

MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 10, 2009
TO: Bruce Blehart
CC: Jerry Barrett
FROM: Ted Thurn
RE: Massachusetts Senate Bill 1436 – Establishes Sleep Awareness Week and Drowsy Driving Prevention Week

- Information Received _____
 Please see me _____

1. Massachusetts Senate Bill 1436

Position: Support

Synopsis

The governor would declare the second week of March as Massachusetts Sleep Awareness Week, and the first Sunday in March as Massachusetts Sleep Awareness Day.

The Governor would recommend that the week receive special attention to the problems of sleep deprivation and fatigue such as: impaired reaction time, judgment and vision; problems with information processing and short-term memory; decreased performance, vigilance and motivation; increased moodiness and aggressive behaviors; and, especially, the dangers of driving under the influence of sleep deprivation or fatigue.

Massachusetts agencies as well as private organizations would adopt policies and programs consistent with the goals of: (1) increasing public awareness about sleep, sleep disorders, and consequences of sleep deprivation; (2) promoting science-based public policies that improve the sleep health of the nation; (3) advancing basic, clinical, applied, and population-based research; and promoting recognition of and access to care for all individuals with sleep disorders.

In addition, the governor would declare the second week of November as Massachusetts Drowsy Driving Prevention Week and recommend that the week receive special attention to the need for public awareness and action relative to the problems of drowsy driving and driver fatigue.

Analysis

The AASM should support Senate Bill 1436 since it is consistent with the positions the Society has taken regarding the issue of drowsy driving. Supporting the bill could also be a good political opportunity since every March and November sleep medicine professionals would be able to meet with state legislators to discuss the dangers of drowsy driving.

Twice a year the AASM would be able to work in concert with the Massachusetts Sleep Society to provide information to state legislators on drowsy driving while simultaneously establishing themselves as the experts on this issue and other important sleep issues.

Although the Massachusetts agencies who would adopt the policies to increase public awareness about sleep have not yet been identified, this would provide the AASM another opportunity to work with policymakers and establish themselves as the experts in sleep. Dunkin' Donuts has been identified as one of the private organizations, however staffers in the Massachusetts legislature has stated that they have dropped out.