

Massachusetts Gov. Baker joins survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence to highlight public safety proposals

Today, Governor Charlie Baker and Lt. Governor Karyn Polito joined Secretary of Public Safety and Security Terrence Reidy, Essex County District Attorney Jonathan Blodgett, legislators, survivors and members of their families, advocates and law enforcement officials to participate in the fourth roundtable discussion highlighting the importance of the Baker-Polito Administration's refiled public safety proposal, which would provide comprehensive new protections for survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, assault and battery, the harmful distribution of explicit images and other crimes.

Watch the roundtable here:

Since refiling An Act to Protect Victims of Crimes and the Public and An Act Relative to the Harmful Distribution of Sexually Explicit Visual Materials in December, the administration has hosted regional roundtables in Plymouth, Springfield, Worcester and Salem as part of its continued efforts to work with survivors and their families and urge the passage of critical legal reforms. Held during Victim Rights Month, today's roundtable featured survivors and their family members whose cases and safety would have been aided by the administration's dangerousness reforms. April is also Sexual Assault Awareness Month and Child Abuse Prevention Month.

"We continue to hear from survivors, their families and advocates that there is more we can and should be doing to

protect the brave men, women and children who have been traumatized by violent offenders and predators,” said Governor Charlie Baker. “This legislation will support survivors by enacting simple, commonsense measures that hold offenders accountable and – most importantly – keep survivors safe.”

“Survivors and their families have already endured so much, and it is incumbent upon us to ensure that their rights are upheld before, while and after their cases are adjudicated,” said Lt. Governor Karyn Polito. “We are deeply grateful to all of today’s participants and their courage in sharing their harrowing experiences in the hopes of passing this critically important legislative package.”

“We remain grateful to the dozens of survivors, loved ones, prosecutors, service providers, and advocates who have participated in these roundtables,” said Public Security Secretary Terrence Reidy. “Their lived experiences expose shortcomings in the Commonwealth’s existing law, which needs urgent, common sense attention. The impact of our proposals will bring hope to those in despair and light into a survivor’s moment of darkness.”

“Since 2018, I have urged the Legislature to address the gaping hole in the law (MGL Chapter 276, Section 58A) which does not permit an assistant district attorney to request a dangerousness hearing for a person charged with raping or sexually assaulting a child,” said Essex County District Attorney Jonathan Blodgett. “One of the primary obligations of government is to protect the safety of the public, particularly the vulnerable, from dangerous people. It is hard to think of anyone more dangerous than an adult who sexually assaults a child and anyone more vulnerable than a child.”

An Act to Protect Victims of Crimes and the Public: First filed in 2018, the Administration’s proposal would expand the list of offenses that can provide grounds for a dangerousness hearing and close certain loopholes at the start and end of

the criminal process that currently limit or prevent effective action to address legitimate safety concerns. It would strengthen the ability of judges to enforce the conditions of pre-trial release by empowering police to detain people who they observe violating court-ordered release conditions; current law does not allow this, and instead requires a court to first issue a warrant. Under this proposal, judges will be empowered to revoke a person's release when the offender has violated a court-ordered condition, such as an order to stay away from a victim, or from a public playground. Current law requires an additional finding of dangerousness before release may be revoked.

The legislation also expands the list of offenses which can provide grounds for a dangerousness hearing including crimes of sexual abuse and crimes of threatened or potential violence. It also follows the long-standing federal model in including a defendant's history of serious criminal convictions as grounds that may warrant a dangerousness hearing. Current law requires courts to focus only on the crime charged and ignore a defendant's criminal history when determining whether the defendant may be the subject of this sort of hearing.

An Act Relative to the Harmful Distribution of Sexually Explicit Visual Materials: First filed in 2017, this legislation seeks to close a loophole under current law by creating penalties for adults who distribute a sexually explicit image for purposes of revenge or embarrassment. While current law addresses non-consensual recording of an unsuspecting person, it does not address instances where someone distributes an image without consent regardless of whether the initial image may have been taken with consent. This legislation closes the gap in state law by creating a new felony offense and empowering judges in criminal proceedings to ensure an explicit image in question is permanently destroyed.

Learn more about the legislation [here](#).