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## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Senate Passes Transgender Anti-Discrimination Legislation**

*Bill provides public accommodations protections for trans residents in Massachusetts*

**BOSTON – Senator Anne M. Gobi (D-Spencer)** has announced that today the Massachusetts Senate solidified its role as a civil rights leader in passing *An Act Relative to Transgender Anti-Discrimination*. This bill provides equal access to public places for every resident of the Commonwealth, regardless of gender identity. Public accommodations include but are not limited to restaurants, nursing homes, coffee shops, grocery stores, and sports arenas.

“I agree with Governor Baker that no one should be discriminated against based on gender identity and I was proud to cast a vote to uphold that principal,” said Senator Gobi.

“I am deeply proud of the Massachusetts Senate for reaffirming our commitment to value and celebrate the diversity of humanity, and fulfilling our sworn duty to uphold civil rights for all individuals as enshrined in the Equal Protection clause of the Massachusetts and United States Constitutions. I am very hopeful that this will become the law of our land as soon as possible. Every day without equal protection under the law for transgender people is another day we tolerate discrimination, and one more day is far too many,” said **Senate President Stan Rosenberg (D-Amherst)**.

According to a 2014 Fenway Health survey, 65 percent of Transgender Massachusetts residents reported experiencing discrimination in public spaces including restaurants, retail establishments, and health service centers. This legislation prevents such discrimination against transgender individuals in public accommodations by adding the phrase “gender identity” to pre-existing law.

This bill builds on the Transgender Equal Rights Bill, passed in 2011, which prohibited discrimination on the basis of gender identity in housing, education, employment, and credit. Where the final bill in 2011 did not

include public accommodations protections, this legislation completes a near decade of advocacy around full inclusion of transgender residents in communities across the Commonwealth.

The bill has received exceptional support from businesses, sports teams, faith leaders, labor unions, and law enforcement across the state. Over the course of the past year more than 200 businesses across the Commonwealth and members of all five New England sports teams came out in support of this bill as central to promoting equal access rights for everyone in Massachusetts.

The bill passed in its original form with a 33-4 vote, with rejection of all but one amendment. The adopted amendment, filed by Senator Sonia Chang-Díaz, is an emergency preamble which calls for the legislation to take effect as soon as it becomes law.

More than 200 cities and towns across the country, including 14 in Massachusetts, already have these protections in place. If implemented at the state level, Massachusetts would become the 18<sup>th</sup> state in the country to offer public accommodations protections to their transgender residents.

The bill now goes to the House of Representatives for consideration.

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