

# **How a Bill Becomes a Law in Massachusetts**

(adapted from the *National Association of Social Workers Massachusetts Chapter*)

## **Step 1**

- A bill is filed with the House or Senate Clerk's office by a legislator.
- It is then assigned to a committee and given a bill number, which is how the bill can be tracked.
- Every bill must then have a public hearing held by the committee to which it is assigned.

## **Step 2**

- After a bill is heard in committee the chairperson of the committee decides to report it out of committee favorably or unfavorably or into a study order.
- If a bill gets reported out favorably it may go to another committee
- If a bill is reported out unfavorably it will go to the Floor of that branch for concurrence and if there is no objection it will die on the floor.
- All bills relating to money originate in the House to the House committee on Ways and Means either after its hearing in the original committee or straight from the clerk's office.

## **Step 3**

- If a bill makes it out of Ways and Means or another committee and then to the Committee on Steering Policy and Scheduling, it goes to the Committee on Third Reading and then if reported out of that committee, to the Floor of one branch and if passed favorably, to the floor of the other branch.

## **Step 4**

- The final step for a bill is engrossment in one branch and then engrossment in the other branch, followed by enactment in each branch. If there are differences in the bill from one branch to the other after engrossment, a conference committee is set up to iron out the differences. Then the bill goes back to its original branch for approval, then to the other branch and is then enacted in each branch and then finally to the Governor's desk. Once the governor makes a decision to sign it, the bill becomes law after 90 days. If the governor vetoes the bill, it goes back to the legislature, which can choose to override the veto with a 2/3 majority in each branch.