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WOMEN'S BAR ASSOCIATION ANNOUNCES SUPPORT OF KEY ALIMONY LEGISLATION

BOSTON, MA – January 28, 2011. The Women's Bar Association of Massachusetts announces its support of SD00107 entitled, "An Act to Reform and Improve Alimony." This legislation will reform the alimony landscape and benefit all parties to alimony arrangements by creating different categories of alimony with set limitations. The bill also provides an important safeguard for families that do not fit squarely within the guidelines by including discretion for courts to address their needs in alimony orders.

Passage of this bill would be a victory for a constituency at the core of the WBA's mission – women and children in Massachusetts – who are often without a voice in the legislative process. Recipients of alimony who are primarily women of low and moderate means, will now have the opportunity to obtain short term alimony in appropriate cases. Additionally, with the income guideline, alimony recipients will benefit from more certainty by being able to approximate what they will receive and the duration of the award. Under this bill, alimony will also be available to women who have been out of the workforce to raise children, those in short-term marriages and low-income women needing assistance to attend school.

The bill was crafted by the Legislative Task Force on Alimony Reform created by the Joint Committee on the Judiciary under the leadership of Senator Cynthia S. Creem and Representative Eugene L. O'Flaherty. Experienced family law attorney Rachel Biscardi, who serves as the Family Law Project Director for the Women's Bar Foundation, the charitable sister organization to the WBA, also devoted countless hours as a member of this task force.

"The WBA is proud to support this legislation. We have fought for many years to ensure that alimony recipients, primarily low-and middle-income women, are represented in the legislative process. This legislation reflects the commitment of the Legislative Task Force on Alimony Reform to respond to their needs as they are going through the personal and financial challenges of divorce," stated WBA President Deborah Hesford DosSantos.

Among its provisions, the 2011 legislation includes:

- Establishing separate alimony categories with clear definitions;
- Adding factors to consider in an alimony order;
- Retaining the ability for parties to modify the order if circumstances allow;
- Setting durational limitations regarding retirement while providing safeguards for older adults who are divorcing; and
- Allowing judicial discretion to deviate from the guidelines if appropriate including in cases involving domestic violence, advanced age, chronic illness, or other financial circumstances.

About the Women's Bar Association of Massachusetts

Founded in 1978 by a group of activist women lawyers, the Women's Bar Association is one of the oldest bar associations in the country. Today, the organization boasts a vast membership of accomplished women lawyers, judges and law students across Massachusetts. The WBA is committed to the full and equal participation of women in the legal profession and in a just society. The WBA works to achieve this mission through committees and taskforces, and by developing and promoting a legislative agenda to address society's most critical social and legal issues. Other WBA activities include drafting amicus briefs, studying employment issues affecting women, encouraging women to enter the judiciary, recognizing the achievement of women in the law, and providing *pro bono* services to women in need through supporting its charitable sister organization, the Women's Bar Foundation. For more information, visit www.womensbar.org.

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