

Somerville Commission for Women  
Department of Racial and Social Justice  
93 Highland Ave  
Somerville, MA 02143

Somerville City Council  
Legislative Matters Committee  
93 Highland Ave  
Somerville, MA 02143

RE: Domestic Violence Leave Policy

Dear Somerville City Council,

The Somerville Commission for Women (SCW) expresses our support for the Ordinance Establishing Paid Leave for Survivors that was submitted by Councilor Burnley on January 12th. This Ordinance will provide support to Somerville employees during moments when they are already vulnerable from experiencing domestic violence, and should empower them to safeguard their safety, health, and well-being. We will be proud to say that our city is supporting employees at a time when they may feel alone.

Domestic violence often affects a survivor's ability to work. According to the advocacy group Legal Momentum, victims of domestic violence lose an average of 137 hours of work a year.<sup>1</sup> Time off is a crucial way for survivors to care for themselves and their families - whether to seek medical attention, secure a restraining order, arrange childcare, or relocate to a safe place. Others may struggle getting to work if an abuser leaves the survivor without a car or without money to use public transportation. A person should never have to choose between caring for themselves and their job, and should not have to worry about the added financial stress of unpaid time off. And while employees do have paid time off, it may be insufficient.

We believe that providing paid leave to help employees take the necessary time to resolve a crisis will benefit both the employee and the city, and by extension, the city residents. By providing this support, the employee will be able to return to their job with one fewer worry about their finances. We believe this is the right thing to do for Somerville employees, and the right thing to do for our city.

Thank you for your support,

The Somerville Commission for Women

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nolo.com/legal-encyclopedia/domestic-violence-leave-taking-time-30129.html>