



MASSACHUSETTS MEDICAL SOCIETY

Every physician matters, each patient counts.

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF S.1537
AN ACT SAFEGUARDING VICTIMS OF ILLICIT DRINK SPIKING
BEFORE THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH
June 25, 2025**

The Massachusetts Medical Society (MMS) wishes to be recorded in support of S.1537, *An Act safeguarding victims of illicit drink spiking*.

The Massachusetts Medical Society is a professional association of over 23,000 physicians, residents, and medical students across all clinical disciplines, organizations, and practice settings. The Medical Society is committed to advocating on behalf of patients, to give them a better health care system, and on behalf of physicians, to help them provide the best care possible. The Medical Society has long advocated against a culture of violence and has policy affirming our commitment to preventing and addressing sexual assault. As such, the Medical Society supports S.1537, which would convene an “Illicit Drink Spiking Response and Intervention Task Force” under the Department of Public Health (DPH). This task force would study, report, and recommend regulations related to the growing public health threat of drink spiking in the Commonwealth. Importantly, the bill also addresses gaps in medical care for victims of predatory drugging, which can significantly delay or prevent access to justice and proper treatment.

Predatory drugs are potent depressants and tranquilizers used to incapacitate victims, commonly for the purpose of committing sexual assault. These substances are frequently undetectable due to their lack of taste or odor and are especially dangerous when combined with alcohol. The resulting health consequences can include respiratory suppression, coma, and even death.

While national data on drug-facilitated sexual assault is limited, law enforcement reports suggest an increase in such incidents, including across Massachusetts.¹ In recent years, dozens of individuals in Boston have sought emergency care after suspected exposure to contaminated drinks in bars and clubs. The Boston Police Department has issued multiple community alerts in response.²³ Other communities across the state have experienced similar incidents.⁴

Amid this escalating public health concern, there is a clear and pressing need to ensure victims of involuntary drugging have access to critical services by improving the way our health care system treats these patients. Despite this, Massachusetts hospitals are not required, and in many cases are not equipped, to test for predatory drugs unless a sexual assault has been confirmed. As a result, individuals who report suspected drink spiking but do not meet the legal definition of sexual assault are frequently denied testing, treatment, and documentation of their exposure.⁵⁶

The task force created by S.1537 would address this growing problem by recommending standardized protocols for hospitals in treating and testing individuals exposed to predatory drugs—regardless of whether a sexual assault occurred. In addition to implementing a testing standard, the bill would permit the use of Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Trust Funds to develop trauma-informed training programs for nurses responding to suspected drugging cases. It would also require DPH to track confirmed drugging incidents and to publish accessible information online about predatory drugs and available resources. Finally, the bill would direct

¹ National Drug Intelligence Center. Department of Justice. Drug Facilitated Sexual Assault Fact Sheet. <https://www.justice.gov/archive/ndic/pubs8/8872/8872p.pdf>

² City of Boston. Order for a Hearing to Address Contaminated Drinks in Clubs and Bars. <https://www.boston.gov/sites/default/files/file/2023/02/Docket.pdf>

³ BPD Community Alert: The Boston Police Department Warns Against Spiked Drinks And Urges Victims To Report The Incidents. December 5, 2023. <https://police.boston.gov/2023/12/05/bpd-community-alert-the-boston-police-department-warns-against-spiked-drinks-and-urges-victims-to-report-the-incidents/>

⁴ Dig Boston. Kendall Pilidori. May 25, 2023. *Massachusetts bill, victim advocates call for coordinated date-rape drug response*. <https://digboston.com/massachusetts-bill-victim-advocates-call-for-coordinated-date-rape-drug-response/>

⁵ 7 News Boston. Victoria Price. *Advocates support state bill to increase support for date rape drug survivors with taskforce, testing*. May 26, 2023. <https://whdh.com/news/advocates-support-state-bill-to-increase-support-for-date-rape-drug-survivors-with-taskforce-testing/>

⁶ 10 Boston. Abbey Niezgoda. February 1, 2023. *A Northeastern Student Has Started a Push to Make Testing for Date Rape Drugs Easier*. <https://www.nbcboston.com/news/local/a-northeastern-student-has-started-a-push-to-make-testing-for-date-rape-drugs-easier/2961509/>.

the Alcoholic Beverages Control Commission (ABCC) to disseminate public education materials on drink spiking and to require bars, clubs, and restaurants to offer testing devices to patrons.

Predatory drugging is not only a violent crime—it is a serious and underrecognized public health issue. Victims face immediate physical risks, long-term trauma, and barriers to justice.

Strengthening our health care system's ability to respond with compassion, clinical rigor, and consistency is critical. Moreover, when victims are tested and cared for appropriately, it can help identify serial offenders and prevent further harm. Building trust in the medical and legal systems encourages more survivors to come forward and creates safer communities for all.

For these reasons, the MMS urges a favorable report on S.1537. Thank you for your consideration.