**Senate President Karen Spilka**

Through hard work, a keen ability to navigate complex issues, and a demonstrated commitment to advocating for her constituents, Senate President Karen E. Spilka has established herself as a respected leader in state government.

Representing the MetroWest communities of the 2nd Middlesex & Norfolk district—comprised of Ashland, Framingham, Holliston, Hopkinton, Medway and Natick—Senate President Spilka is dedicated to the advancement of progressive social causes and a pragmatic fiscal policy of balancing investments in education, infrastructure, and economic opportunity with saving for the future. She has championed issues such as mental health, juvenile justice and services for the elderly and disabled communities. During her career, Senate President Spilka has been a social worker, small business owner and attorney, and she went on to become one of the first legislators in the nation to vote in favor of marriage equality and transgender protections.

Karen Spilka’s tenure as Senate President has included the legislature’s response to the COVID-19 public health crisis. As a part of this response, the Senate President pursued the passage of Patients First legislation, which eliminated barriers to care and advanced support for community hospitals, COVID testing sites, medical staff and telehealth services. Despite a crisis that resulted in budget cuts throughout much of the country, Senate President Spilka’s leadership in establishing one of the most robust Rainy-Day funds in the country allowed Massachusetts to not only avoid cuts to social safety nets, but rather expand support for housing stability, food security, unemployment benefits and relief for the hospitality and restaurant industries.

Senate President Spilka’s first priority as Senate President was the passage of the Student Opportunity Act (SOA), the culmination of a twenty-year effort which combined the largest increase in education funding in Massachusetts’ history with changes to make future education funding more equitable. In the wake of protests stemming from the murder of George Floyd, she led the effort to pass one of the most comprehensive and intentional police reform bills in the United States, including the creation of a first-in-the-nation civilian-led commission with the power to independently investigate police actions. In response to the threat posed by climate change, she supported a law which provided a timeline for a complete transition away from fossil fuels and toward a carbon-neutral economy and which codified the concept of environmental justice into law.

Most recently, Senate President Spilka has led a number of efforts to decrease the barriers to accessing quality mental health care, including directing state funding towards public awareness of mental and behavioral health, as well as to increasing the mental health workforce pipeline. She has also introduced the concept of Intergenerational Care Centers as a way to address the caregiving crisis in Massachusetts, provide support for women in the workforce, and encourage high quality caregiving for all residents, from infants to elders.

Senate President Spilka is a graduate of Northeastern Law School and holds a B.S. in Social Work from Cornell University. She has been married for over thirty years to Joel S. Loitherstein, an environmental engineer, and has three adult children, Heather, Scott and Jake, and two rescue dogs, Lincoln and Mikasa.