



**For Immediate Release
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**Rep. William Straus
(617) 722-2320**

IDENTITY THEFT PREVENTION BILL SIGNED INTO LAW

BOSTON, MA. – Governor Deval Patrick has signed into law new provisions providing Identity Theft protection for Massachusetts residents. Rep. Bill Straus (D.-Mattapoisett) a leading sponsor of the new law, “*An Act Relative to Security Freezes and Notification of Data Breaches*,” applauded the Governor’s support for the bill.

Identity Theft is one of the fastest growing threats facing consumers in Massachusetts. The new law requires businesses and governments to notify consumers when their data is lost or stolen and sets standards for the disposal of records that contain personal information.

“The heart of this legislation is to stop identity theft before it happens. As a result of recent events, having to do with the release of private consumer information, the urgency of passing Identity Theft legislation to protect the citizens of Massachusetts was extremely important” said Rep. Straus. “This bill is another tool for consumers to use against identity theft” said Straus. Representative Straus was one of six legislators serving on the House-Senate Conference Committee which negotiated the final details of the legislation sent to the Governor by the Legislature.

The new law allows consumers to secure credit freezes to prevent new accounts from being fraudulently created in their name. The law also requires documents containing personal information to be bumed, pulverized or shredded.

Governor Patrick said “This law recognizes the new risks facing consumers today and puts a number of critical safeguards in place to help the people of Massachusetts protect their credit and their good names.”

According to the Federal Trade Commission, identity theft affects 10 million Americans annually and costs individuals and businesses \$52 billion a year. A number of high profile

cases across the country and here in Massachusetts have made headlines throughout the year. Framingham retailer TJX Cos. recently disclosed to customers that thieves had gained access to more than 45 million credit and debit-card numbers from its computers.

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