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**Testimony in Support of House Bill 4444  
Submitted April 6, 2004**

Thank you for convening this public hearing on House Bill 4444. My name is Ann Eldridge Malone and I am here to speak in strong support of this Bill.

The patients I care for and the communities that I live and work in are the reasons why I support this initiative to ensure comprehensive and affordable health insurance for all. Since I was 16 years old I have worked in a variety of health care settings in Massachusetts and loved it, for the most part. For 12 years I have worked as a nurse, starting on an oncology unit and for 8 years as a home care nurse and a nurse educator.

The patient stories I will share with you now (the names have been changed) are the reasons why I ask you and all your colleagues in the legislature to support House Bill 4444. These patients are just the tip of the iceberg of what is happening in the lives of over 600,000 neighbours of ours in the Bay State who currently do not have health insurance.

Thomas is a 48-year-old man without health insurance. I cared for Thomas after he had half of his foot amputated due to undiagnosed diabetes. His chronic elevated blood sugars and subsequent nerve damage had led to a severe foot infection that he was not

aware of. Thomas did not seek medical care until he had trouble walking and sought free care at an emergency room. Thomas' illness was so advanced that even a lengthy hospital stay with intravenous antibiotic treatment could not save his foot.

Thomas had worked for many years as a janitor. His job did not offer health insurance and he did not get paid enough to purchase it on his own. I feel heartsick that a hardworking man like Thomas is now permanently disabled and has suffered so much—and required such costly care—because he did not have affordable health insurance and access to primary health care. With health insurance his diabetes would most likely have been diagnosed much sooner and prevented his amputation.

Joanne, a 58 year old woman without health insurance. Joanne was my patient while undergoing chemotherapy and radiation therapy for advanced cancer of the esophagus. She was diagnosed at a very late stage in part, she thought, because she did not seek care when her symptoms first began.

Joanne worked as a security guard at a hospital and could not afford to purchase her own health insurance. She hoped the problems she was having swallowing food would get better on their own, but they did not. When eventually she could not swallow solid food she sought free care in the emergency room of the hospital where she worked. Joanne was eventually diagnosed with cancer of the esophagus and began extensive treatment. Joanne died from her cancer.

Statistics from many reputable sources tell us that patients without health insurance live sicker lives and die younger. Nurses don't need statistics to know this; we see it in our work and it is tragic. It is also unnecessary. It is very demoralizing to be a part of a health care system--and a society--that allows this epidemic of uninsurance to continue. We can do better--much better.

The money we could save by providing comprehensive insurance coverage and access to timely primary health care would offset the money required to ensure health insurance for all of us. And think of the human suffering that would be prevented. Please support House Bill 4444; it's the smart thing to do and it's the right thing to do.

Thank you.