



Greater Boston
Interfaith Organization

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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GBIO Faith Leaders Demand Commitments from Next Senator

Date: Sunday, November 15th

Time: 7:00pm – 8:30pm

Location: Bethel AME Church, 38 Walk Hill St, Jamaica Plain

Attorney General Martha Coakley, Representative Michael Capuano, Mr. Alan Khazei, and Mr. Steve Pagliuca have all agreed to meet with 600 leaders of the Greater Boston Interfaith Organization (GBIO)'s 55 member congregations at 7:00pm on Sunday, November 15th at Bethel AME Church in Jamaica Plain, co-pastored by the Rev. Dr. Ray Hammond, founder and chairman of the Ten Point Coalition, and the Rev. Dr. Gloria White-Hammond, co-chair of the Massachusetts Coalition to Save Darfur. At this meeting, clergy and lay leaders of GBIO will deliver demands for action on key issues facing families in their congregations to the candidates for U.S. Senate hoping to fill the late Ted Kennedy's seat.

This event will not be a typical forum. Instead, the candidates will be asked to answer "yes" or "no" as to whether they will commit to implementing a specific issue platform when in office. This platform asks for the next senator to work with GBIO to:

- **Protect low and moderate income families from erosion of healthcare access and affordability, which may be caused by national reform; and restore Commonwealth Care coverage for 31,000 legal immigrants in MA**
- **Reinstate national caps on interest rates that lenders can charge by setting a limit of 10%**
- **Bring home \$100,000 million per year for job training and supportive services in MA**
- **Prohibit lenders from selling student loans with interest rates higher than permitted for federal student loans; and close the loophole prohibiting relief of student debt through bankruptcy**

This issue platform originated from a series of 200 house meetings hosted by GBIO member institutions last spring to share personal stories about how the economic crisis is impacting families. "I accepted an offer to consolidate my credit card debt totaling \$6,000 at an interest rate of 3.99%. When I got my bill, I had instead been charged 27.9%, inexplicably. I called the bank, and they hung up on me," testifies Nancy Kilburn, a GBIO leader from First Church Cambridge, UCC. Joanna Lubkin, a leader from the Jewish Community Relations Council explains, "After graduating in 2008 with honors, I owed \$65,000 to four lenders. Sallie Mae charges me 9% on a loan of \$14,000, a payment I couldn't defer while unemployed. I feel like I'm drowning."

Founded in 1996, the Greater Boston Interfaith Organization organizes the communities of Greater Boston across all religious, racial, ethnic, class, and neighborhood lines to hold both public and private power holders accountable for their public responsibilities. GBIO's organizing played a key role in achieving health care reform and affordability standards for health care in Massachusetts. November 15th will mark GBIO's first venture bringing its local and state power to bear on the national political landscape.