BOSTON Herald

PATRICK J. PURCELL, Publisher
JOE SCIACCA, Editor In Chief
RACHELLE COHEN,
Editorial Page Editor
JULIE MEHEGAN,
Deputy Editorial Page Editor

LETTERS Send your opinion to Letters, Boston Herald, P.O. Box 55843, Boston, MA 02205-5843 or via e-mail to letterstoeditor a bostonherald.com. All must be typewritten; some may be edited.

Smart on crime

Your editorial on the governor's sentencing bill ("Going soft on crime," Jan. 28) notes that when it comes to the school zone law, "in a city like Boston it's pretty hard not to be within 1,000 feet of a school." As a researcher who has studied the state's school zone law, I agree. And that's the problem.

The 1,000-foot distance is itself a flaw. That distance — greater than the length of three football fields — has created school zones so large that few people know the boundaries. Which means that the zones don't drive drug activity away from children, as intended.

The governor's bill would reduce school zones to 100 feet of a school or its property, which is the same size as the drug-free zones drawn around parks and playgrounds. A tightly drawn drug-free zone has a greater deterrent effect. His bill also keeps the mandatory minimum sentence for school zone offenses and retains two other vital laws that require mandatory sentences for selling drugs to minors or using them in drug transactions. The governor's proposal is not soft on crime. It's smart.

— Peter Wagner,
Executive Director
Prison Policy Initiative
Northampton