

Supporting human services workers in Western MA

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Council members honor Dr. King



(Left) A staff member from Open Sky Community Services highlights the pin received at the 39th Annual Community Breakfast honoring Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. at Assumption College. (Top right) The Pine Street Inn staff choir performed "Lift Every Voice and Sing" on MLK Day. (Bottom right) Youth leaders from Children's Services of Roxbury's Youth, Purpose and Partnership program assemble care packages for local shelters.

In January, numerous members of the Providers' Council celebrated the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., from hosting events honoring the civil rights icon to volunteering in their communities.

Riverside Community Care held its annual celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Black History Month on January 31. A major theme for RCC's 2024 virtual event

was to celebrate the women of the Civil Rights Movement and their legacy. Arndrea King Waters, an activist for equity and justice President of the Drum Major Institute and wife of Martin Luther King III, provided the keynote address.

"We take a lot of pride in our D&I efforts at Riverside, and by opening these events up to anyone who wants to attend, we get to showcase River-

side's D&I work, continually learn and grow and honor the recognition days," said CEO Marsha Medalie.

Youth leaders from Children's Services of Roxbury's (CSR) Youth, Purpose, and Partnership program volunteered at the MLK Day of Service Not Rest event, where they assembled and distributed care

MLK, see page 7

Governor's budget includes \$390M for 257 Reserve

The human services sector may receive a record amount of state dollars next year, after Governor Maura Healey presented her \$58.1 billion FY '25 budget proposal in late January.

"Our budget proposal for fiscal year 2025 shows a path forward to continue making the necessary investments in housing, education, climate, transit and workforce development that will strengthen our communities and our employers, protect our most vulnerable and bring even greater equity to the work we do every day," Healey said.

The spending plan includes \$390 million for the Chapter 257

Reserve, which represents an increase of \$160 million, or 70%, from FY '23. The Council compared the Chapter 257-line item to the FY '23 budget, rather than the FY '24 budget, because the number of Chapter 257 rates reviewed by EOHHS alternate in proportion every other year.

The \$230 million allocated for the reserve in FY '23 was previously the highest ever allotment for the line item, making Gov. Healey's newly proposed amount a monumental gain.

"We are incredibly grateful that Gov. Healey is making a record investment in the human services sector," said

BUDGET, see page 8

EOHHS rolls out human services student loan repayment program

Over two years after the state passed the *American Rescue Plan Act* spending bill that included \$16.5 million for a student loan repayment program for human services workers, the *MA Repay: Human Service and Home Health Worker Loan Repayment Program* officially launched at the end of January to distribute the awaited funds.

"We are thrilled that this program has gone live and that the essential workers in our sector who fill more than 160,000 jobs are now able to receive much-needed relief to pay back their student loans," said Providers' Council President and CEO Bill Yelenak. "We are tremendously thankful for our state partners for helping to make this long-awaited dream a real-

ity." The program will be accepting applications until 11:59 p.m. on February 26 or until the award amounts requested by applicants reach approximately twice the available award funding for this program as determined by the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS), whichever comes first.

The *MA-Repay Program* requires a 1-, 2-, or 3-year service commitment and awards range from \$6,000 up to \$30,000 depending on level of education and full-time or part-time hours. Applicants must work in eligible settings of programs that provide treatment, support or services to clients or their families and are operated by a

LOANS, see page 7

Council submits testimony backing Gov. Healey's housing bond bill



The Joint Committee on Housing hears testimony regarding The Affordable Homes Act.

Continuing its advocacy efforts to better the lives of the human services workers in Massachusetts, the Providers' Council submitted testimony to the Joint Committee on Housing in January in support of Gov. Maura Healey's \$4 billion housing bond bill.

Known as *The Affordable Homes Act*, the comprehensive bill represents the largest housing investment in

Massachusetts history. The initiative will fund or enable the creation of more than 40,000 homes that otherwise would not be built, including 22,000 new homes for low-income households.

"It is essential that we provide the workers who fill 160,000 jobs in this sector affordable housing options near where they work; this will allow thou-

BILL, see page 7



Massachusetts Council of Human Services Providers, Inc.
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Framingham, MA 01702

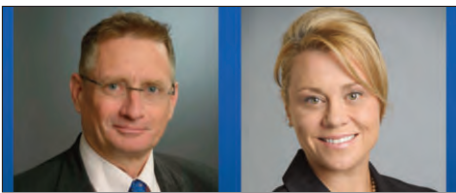
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Justice Resource Institute CEO Andy Pond retires

Justice Resource Institute (JRI) announced in January that CEO Andy Pond had retired following 40 years of dedication to the nonprofit. JRI's board of trustees unanimously endorsed chief operating officer Mia DeMarco to succeed Pond.

"During Andy's tenure, JRI has grown in size and scope but has never lost its core values or commitment to justice," said Francine Rosenberg, chairperson of the board of trustees. "Andy has consistently modeled integrity and passion for the mission of this organization. He has cultivated a strong, diverse, and highly competent leadership team who will help to assure a seamless transition."

With a tenure of over 20 years at JRI, DeMarco has spearheaded various initiatives, including capital projects, mergers, program development and strategic partnerships. She fosters a culture of excellence and engagement, utilizing her extensive experience and strong leadership background to make a lasting impact.



Andy Pond and Mia DeMarco

National Council of Nonprofits President and CEO Tim Delaney to retire in July

The National Council of Nonprofits announced in January that President and CEO Tim Delaney will retire on July 10, after spending 16 years in the role. Following his retirement, Delaney will spend a year as a Fellow in the Inspired Leadership Initiative at the University of Notre Dame.

The NCN board of directors has initiated a search for his successor. During his tenure, Delaney transformed NCN from a quiet, inward-looking trade association into a robust and agile network focused externally as it champions, connects and informs charitable nonprofits to improve lives, add vitality to communities and enhance the health of our democracy.

"I cannot imagine a more fulfilling role than getting to advance and protect the vital work of America's crown jewels – charitable nonprofits – that improve countless lives daily in ways both visible and invisible," Delaney said.

Tempus Unlimited hires David Goldberg as new CFO

Officials from Tempus Unlimited, Inc., a Stoughton-based nonprofit that supports children and adults with disabilities, announced last year that David Goldberg has been hired as their new chief financial officer.

Goldberg brings with him several years of experience in accounting, finance and taxation, holds a CPA and is certified as an IRS special enrolled agent. He has risen through various accounting and finance roles, most recently holding the title of corporate controller, gaining industry-specific experience in the fiscal intermediary sector. He also has experience with improving systems and building strong financial processes.

Goldberg will work closely with the CEO and other members of senior leadership to ensure Tempus Unlimited continues supporting the community and its consumers.



Tim Delaney



David Goldberg

John Drake joins Bridgewell's board of directors

Bridgewell, a nonprofit social and human services organization serving northeastern Massachusetts, announced in January that John Drake had been elected to a three-year term on its board of directors.

"John brings extensive professional and nonprofit volunteerism experience to our board," said President and CEO Christopher Tuttle. "Importantly, as a parent of a person with disabilities, he understands the value of our work and the challenges we have to overcome. We're thrilled to welcome John to the board."

Drake, a resident of Andover, is a managing director at Accenture, a global consulting, technology and business services company, where he has worked for more than 30 years. He holds a bachelor's degree in computer science from Worcester Polytechnic Institute. Drake is a trustee of the Cotting School and chairs its Development Committee.

Doc Wayne Youth Services appoints Tref Borden as new board member

Doc Wayne Youth Services, a nonprofit provider of sport-based mental health therapy for youth, announced in January the appointment of Tref Borden to its board, bringing the total number of board members to 14.

Borden most recently served as executive director of the Fish Family Foundation, a Boston-based private foundation focusing primarily on human services for low-income individuals and families in the Greater Boston area, with a particular interest in immigration and naturalization programs. "Tref provides a level of philan-

thropic and human services expertise that will further strengthen our distinguished board as we continue to expand both nationally and globally," said Board Chair Shalini Kasida. "With unrelenting tragedies happening around the world, making mental health therapy access a priority for youth via training for organizations, clinicians, teachers, coaches and other development professionals is essential to helping young people and children process and heal."



Tref Borden

Victory Programs, Inc. announces Kelly Whalen as new chief development officer

Victory Programs, Inc. announced in December that Kelly Whalen was appointed as the nonprofit's new chief development officer.

Whalen brings a combination of passion and experience from the private and nonprofit sectors to her new position. She is committed to bringing about positive change for the common good, especially those facing homelessness. She began her development career at the College of the Holy Cross as the director of the President's Council, where she participated in the college's Become More fundraising campaign which raised \$420 million.

Most recently, Whalen served as the senior director of development and communications at Abby Kelley Foster House in Worcester. Since 2018, she has served in a senior leadership capacity helping to implement and shape the development program to serve hundreds of women and children experiencing homelessness.



Kelly Whalen

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EXCITING NEWS!

USI is pleased to announce that the Providers' Council Delta Dental program is renewing with a 3-year hold!

No increase to rates through 2027 and...

now covering mouthguards, enhanced fluoride and sealant coverage, enhanced implant coverage and more.

The Delta Dental program is one of the Council's most popular programs. Interested Council members can receive a **free, no-obligation analysis** of their potential savings through the Delta Dental program.



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PROVIDER PROFILES

CENTER FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

332 BIRNIE AVENUE • SPRINGFIELD, MA 01107 • 413.733.6624 • CHD.ORG

About the Agency

The Center for Human Development (CHD) is a non-profit providing a broad range of the highest quality behavioral health, substance use treatment and community support services to 25,000 children, adolescents, adults and families each year in western Massachusetts and Connecticut.

The agency was founded in 1972 with community-based care as the heart and soul of its mission. In CHD's early days, it became known as an organization with creative, progressive, and comprehensive approaches to mental health care, developing successful group home models that emerged as an alternative to institutional mental health programs. The models were duplicated nationally and led to major expansion and distinction for the agency.

In a half-century, CHD has become one of the largest and most diverse social services organizations in western New England and one of the region's largest employers.

CHD is internationally accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities. The agency's funding comes from various sources, including federal and state agencies, insurance reimbursement and donor contributions.

CHD supports those from all walks of life



For over 50 years, CHD has been supporting populations across western New England.

CHD offers more than 80 programs and services that help people tackle life's toughest problems. Its programming spans a broad array that includes **mental health, addiction recovery services, juvenile justice services, intellectual and development disability support, adult day health, foster care, post-incarceration programs, child development and advocacy, housing services, family stabilization and youth welfare and court-guided support.**

CHD has succeeded as an agency that is a hybrid of behavioral health and social service programming, fulfilling the needs of its client base by addressing the social determinants of health that influence health outcomes. **Finding affordable housing and fighting food insecurity** are daily priorities at the agency – pragmatism in combating the factors that create conditions for need – and every year, CHD helps thousands of people with both **emergency and long-term housing solutions.**

In recent years, the agency has grown tremendously because, as social welfare needs have changed, CHD has been able to adapt and provide more services in more areas. The opioid crisis, for example, has led to demand for more CHD **substance use services.** Children's mental health is another growth area for CHD. In the spring, CHD will open a **clinic in East Longmeadow** with a focus on **youth mental health services** serving children and ado-

lescents.

In early 2023, CHD opened its **Community Behavioral Health Center** in Chicopee, which is improving access to essential care for people and families and reducing the impact of urgent mental health demands on the healthcare and emergency response systems.

Last fall, CHD received a \$1 million grant from the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration to integrate primary care and behavioral health services at its **Park Street Outpatient Behavioral Health Clinic** in West Springfield.

CHD has also differentiated itself by offering some distinctive programs – wrap-arounds to state-guided services that serve people from all backgrounds in significant areas of need. They include **Cancer House of Hope**, which offers support services to people in cancer treatment, survivors and family members; **All In: Barrier-Free Recreation**, which gives adults and children with disabilities an opportunity to participate in athletics and other recreational activities; the support and community meals programs **Family Outreach of Amherst and Not Bread Alone**; and **Big Brothers Big Sisters of Hampshire County.** CHD's reach extends beyond the traditional because the mission of all these programs lines up with the organization's commitment to a community-based approach that holistically benefits our communities.

Executive Leadership

Jim Goodwin, CHD's president, and CEO since 2005, has devoted his professional career to helping those in need. A highly respected leader in the behavioral health field, he has held several leadership roles across the organization.

For more than 40 years, Goodwin has been a driving force behind CHD's evolution, expanding its breadth of services and geographic reach so that more people throughout western Massachusetts and Connecticut can access the agency's life-changing care. Under his leadership, CHD has grown from a \$48 million entity to \$170 million, and from 1,300 employees to 2,000.



Jim Goodwin

Goodwin has led CHD to step in and provide services where many other organizations would not, including people involved with the justice system, the un-housed and people with severe mental illness or disability.

Goodwin holds master's degrees in education and business and sits on several boards, including the Providers' Council and the Association for Behavioral Healthcare.

In 2023, the Council presented him with the Award of Excellence for CEO of the Year.

SALUTING THE CARING FORCE

Greenblatt is admired by staff

Seth Greenblatt is best described as a "jack-of-all-trades," having spent time in nearly every program that **Incompass Human Services** offers since joining the agency in 2011. After living in Australia for a year, Greenblatt was inspired to reenter the human services workforce and his passion for the work has driven his career advancement at Incompass. When family support, day habilitation or community-based day services need an extra set of hands, he never hesitates. In spring 2023, Greenblatt was promoted to the TREE program manager, a facility-based day program.

In his current role, Greenblatt supports adults with complex life experiences, psychiatric diagnoses, and behavioral challenges. As program manager, he oversees the individual support plans for each program participant, organizes vocational training opportunities and handles data entry for the home and community services information system.

Managing the 12 staff who work in

the TREE program is no small feat. Greenblatt leverages his hard and soft skills to be an efficient leader. His bachelor's degree in communications gives him an edge when collaborating with other departments within the agency. In contrast, his MAP, CPR and first aid

certifications are critical in maintaining a safe environment for staff and participants.

Outside of the technical responsibilities of his position, Greenblatt emphasizes the importance of putting the "human" into human services. "Seth has embraced his time in the TREE program and made great strides in developing relationships with participants that has contributed to their positive experiences in the program," Director of Day Services Emily Horn said. He is admired by staff for being personable, dependable, and always "on the clock" when a situation arises.

Greenblatt meets people with the compassion and open-mindedness that allows them to be their most authentic selves, truly encompassing what it means to be a care champion.



Seth Greenblatt supports adults with complex needs at Incompass.

Ifill is dedicated to helping others

Justin Ifill started working for **Almadan, Inc.** over a year ago as a direct support professional in the individual supports program. The program offers tailor-made support services to individuals living independently. He provides supervision, assistance and support to individuals receiving services from Almadan, Inc. based on the needs outlined in each of their support plans.

He ensures the health and safety of all individuals receiving services, assists with personal care, community integration, fund management and social skill development. He is meticulous in his completion of required documentation.

"I enjoy [this work] and want to always give back to my community," Ifill said.

Ifill has developed a trusting relationship with the individual he primarily cares for. He invites that person's partner on outings, helping to build a

stronger bond between the individual and their partner.

"I have a lot of faith in the things he does for me, and he puts up with a lot of my crap," the individual said. "I get on his case sometimes, but he will always have a job with me."

In addition, Ifill picks up shifts with many individuals in a relief capacity. Many of the individuals he has interacted with now request his support.

When Ifill is not busy providing care to individuals, he is teaching dance at Urbanity Dance. With his background in dance education, Ifill brings many skills to his work at Almadan, Inc.

"Justin is very dedicated and performs well under pressure. He provides guidance and

encourages solutions to problems and is committed to ensuring there is a resolution," said Case Manager NiCole Jones. "When Justin is given a task, you can rest assured it will get done."



At Almadan, Inc., Justin Ifill ensures the health and safety of all individuals receiving services.

EDITORIAL



William Yelenak
President / Publisher

Your vote remains paramount

I had the opportunity last month to speak to a group of new and emerging leaders at one of our member organizations about the political process in Massachusetts, the Providers' Council's advocacy efforts on behalf of the community-based human services sector and one of my favorite topics that will have critical importance in 2024: nonpartisan voter engagement.

This year is a presidential election year, and Massachusetts will join 13 other states next month – on Super Tuesday, March 5 – to cast ballots for the Democratic and Republican nominees for President of the United States.

And while you may have fewer choices on that day than you have had in past presidential election years, it is important to note how many choices Massachusetts voters will have on Election Day on Tuesday, November 5th. Just eight months after Super Tuesday, residents of the Commonwealth will elect a U.S. Senator from Massachusetts, nine members of the state's U.S. House delegation, 160 state representatives, 40 state senators, members of the Governor's Council and more. That is in addition to potentially six ballot questions on items including education, the minimum wage of tipped employees, Uber/Lyft drivers and more.

At the Council, nonpartisan voter engagement is of critical importance. For the last quarter century, we have run the CareVote campaign to encourage those in the community-based human services sector to register to vote and cast a ballot “to support caring communities.” In January, the Human Services Providers Charitable Foundation, Inc. and our CareVote campaign sent more than 1,000 posters to Council members to be hung in common areas letting employees know about critical dates to register to vote and cast a ballot. In February and March, we will be launching geofencing mobile advertising around the state to encourage people to vote in the upcoming election.

We are so dedicated to voting at the Council, we started asking our members back in 2010 to become “voterized” – that is, registered and ready to vote in an upcoming election. But I am here to tell you that simply being registered and ready to vote is not enough. They are terrific first steps, but to make an impact and help create caring communities throughout the Commonwealth, it is important to cast a ballot in elections happening in Massachusetts. You need to vote in the presidential primary on March 5, the state primary on September 3 and the general election on November 5.

We know that elected officials can see if you are registered to vote, but it

is critical to know that elected officials can also see if you vote or not, and they take notice. They never can see who you vote for, but they know if you are an active participant in the voting process. That is why it is critical for us all to use our voices and cast ballots on Election Day to elect those whom we want representing our interests on Beacon Hill in Massachusetts and on Capitol Hill in Washington. If the community-based human services sector wants to be well represented by those who support our sector, then it is not just critical to take that first step and register to vote. We need to follow up – and show up and show out – on Election Day.

“Always vote for principle, though you vote alone, and you may cherish the sweet reflection that your vote is never lost.”

President
John Quincy Adams

I cannot stress enough how much your vote matters. As recently as 2010, the Massachusetts House saw a tie in the race for the 6th Worcester district House seat. It is just not enough to be “voterized” in Massachusetts – you need to ensure you cast a ballot on Election Day. Even if you cannot physically get to the polls, the Commonwealth also has no-excuse early voting by mail for state elections, state primaries, presidential primaries, and most local elections – you can go online to request a ballot be mailed to you. There's also in-person early voting for many elections where you can go in-person ahead of time to cast a ballot.

If you are not already registered to vote or you want to update your address, your party or other details, you can visit sec.state.ma.us/ovr/ from your computer or cell phone to complete the process. Registering to vote and casting a ballot in elections has never been easier, so we must ensure that human services workers make their voice heard during elections this year.

President John Quincy Adams once opined about voting: “Always vote for principle, though you vote alone, and you may cherish the sweet reflection that your vote is never lost.” I hope you will join me and others in the community-based human services sector this year on March 5, September 3 and November 5 in casting a ballot “to support caring communities.”



This piece was created by Jason Melo, a participant in Northeast Arc's Steps to Create program, which offers classes to those interested in a career in the arts.

Want to highlight the artwork of your program participants?
Contact Stefan at sgeller@providers.org for more information.



100 Crossing Blvd., Suite 100 • Framingham, MA 01702
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Easton Wings of Hope: A beacon for substance use prevention

By Colleen Less and Kelly Reed

When Easton resident Kristin Harrison tragically lost her niece to medical complications caused by opioid use in January of 2015, she went to work. Reaching out to town leaders on the Board of Selectman, Easton School Committee, public safety leaders and public-school nurses, Harrison shared her desire to form a coalition to educate and support the community, determined to avoid further tragedy and loss of life. She gathered with experts from the community, the local YMCA and residents determining that creating a coalition supported by federal dollars through the Drug-Free Communities Grant program would be the most effective and sustainable path forward. Harrison, a nurse by profession, turned a family tragedy into a positive community movement. Her initiative led to the creation of Easton Wings of Hope (EWOH), a community coalition fiscally sponsored by Old Colony YMCA that is committed to educating and supporting residents in the face of substance use challenges.

Volunteer-driven efforts and community support marked the early years. Harrison's outreach efforts to key stakeholders fostered buy-in from various sectors, enabling EWOH to conduct the Easton Public Schools' first youth risk behavior survey. While substance use disorder knows no bounds, Easton, like many other communities, saw it as an outside issue only affecting other towns. This survey became a crucial tool for the Easton Public Schools, providing baseline data that targeted messaging around vaping, alcohol use and drug use. EWOH's dedication earned them a Drug-Free Communities grant, moving the organization into a new phase of professional growth.

When Easton Wings of Hope was honored with the National Blue-Ribbon Award earlier this year from the White House, it validated the challenging work of coalition members. That work created a solid foundation from which a structured, focused, and effective coalition could change attitudes around substances, involve students and families in positive messaging and embark on a community-wide movement to keep Easton residents safe and healthy. Receiving the award represented a full-

circle moment for the coalition.

Seven years into its Drug-Free Communities funding, EWOH is focused on sustaining its early success. The coalition has seen significant reductions in youth substance use, evident in the youth risk behavior survey. Recent partnerships with the public school district helped drive this change, as well as the introduction of Positive Community Norms, a framework addressing misperceptions surrounding youth substance use.

As a coalition, EWOH has encouraged open communication about positive life choices and the negative impacts of substance use. Young people are willing partners in this communication, attending Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA) conferences, state substance use conferences and youth coalition meetings. Young people have participated in weeklong programming hosted by local colleges over the summer and have shared what they learned with their families and communities. As youth participation grows, so does the community's recognition of our work, which is evident when residents approach us at local road races, family fun days, on Drug Take Back Day and at other events. The EWOH butterfly logo is a well-recognized fixture of the Easton community, present at multiple events throughout the year.

The coalition's goal is to transition to a fully community-led approach. The sustainability of the coalition will be reliant on continued community buy-in, data collection and financial support. By continuing to emphasize the importance and effectiveness of prevention, these necessary goals can continue to be reached. Individuals looking to support the coalition's work can do so by using their skills and voices to advance prevention messaging and programming, contributing financially or by seeking out opportunities to volunteer with the coalition.

Colleen Less is a steering committee member of Easton Wings of Hope and Kelly Reed is the drug-free communities project coordinator at Old Colony YMCA.

Untapped Talent Consortium supports foreign-born workers

By Emmanuel Owusu

Mark Omojowo has been a proud resident of Massachusetts since 2021, when he resettled from Kenya. Inspired by a case worker who helped him and his family feel welcome and navigate day-to-day life, Omojowo now works to better his community by counseling newly immigrated families.

Immigrants and refugees are a critical part of our communities and the backbone of our human services sector, where 1 in 5 workers are foreign-born and 60 percent are workers of color.

Many foreign-born workers in the human services sector hold college degrees from their home countries but often are placed in roles without pathways or tools to advance their careers in the sector.

Underemployment is common among people of color who work in the human services sector, as highlighted in a 2020 study by Simmons University. People of color who work in the human services sector are underpaid, discriminated against, and have little to no representation in leadership or career advancement opportunities.

To steer our sector on the right path and shape the next generation of human services workers, African Bridge Network (ABN) launched the Untapped Talent Consortium in 2019, which evaluates how to best support the needs of a diverse workforce and identify opportunities to attract and retain more of Massachusetts' growing immigrant and refugee population.

In 2022, ABN brought the Consortium together with five human service agencies to implement policies, structures, and programs to support the career advancement of people of color in the workforce.

Since then, three main trends have emerged among the agencies in the Consortium: 1. Proactively supporting their workforce's career advancement 2. Improving engagement of their BIPOC and foreign-born staff 3. Developing a pipeline of diverse leaders.

Bay Cove Human Services has documented internal career development pathways by conducting a staff survey to better understand the needs of employees, specifically staff of color and foreign-born staff. They have mapped comprehensive career pathways for each position, showing the minimum skills and education requirements needed for advancement and made career pathways available to all staff

through an online platform, with training for managers, supervisors and human resources staff on how to use the tool.

HMEA developed an apprenticeship program to place foreign-born staff apprentices into managerial positions. Each apprentice met weekly with their primary mentor to receive ongoing training regarding HMEA systems, processes and procedures and participated in job shadowing opportunities that included time to debrief on their experience.

Venture Community Services developed a leadership program and career pathway projects. The leadership program was designed with middle managers of color to address professional development needs, including cultural awareness training, and develop a train-the-trainer model. Venture Community Services also distributed a staff survey to identify career pathways of interest and identified ambassadors throughout agency departments to disseminate information about career pathway programs.

Advocates initiated a Workforce Development Unit to promote career advancement into management positions and on-the-job training, with a focus on staff of color and foreign-born staff. Advocates hired a career navigator to support onboarding new staff, and are considering developing ambassadors throughout the agency to spread the word about the Workforce Development Unit.

Thrive Support and Advocacy developed a six-month mentoring program for five staff members interested in career advancement, including staff of color and foreign-born staff. The program included training for mentors, group sessions and individual mentor-mentee meetings. Mentees created individual staff development plans with set goals to track progress. Graduates of the program underwent training to become mentors for the next program cycle.

In 2024, the current members of the Consortium look forward to integrating and scaling their workforce career advancement projects. As a Consortium, we seek to admit more members to expand the community of human service employers actively working to support the careers of their foreign-born workforce.

Emmanuel Owusu is the executive director of African Bridge Network.

Despite the pushback, DEIJA remains as important as ever

By Felicia Heywood and Sonia D'Alarcao

When many people in this country are pushing back against efforts that support Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Justice, and Accessibility (DEIJA), why should organizations still do it? Primarily, it is the right thing to do. The racial reckoning of 2020 created a growing awareness that a society which ignores these values does not work for all of us. Many organizations began or renewed efforts to incorporate these principles into their strategic planning and operations. Do we want to turn back on that progress? If we do so, it is at our peril. As Generation Z makes its way into the workforce, they often view DEIJA as

non-negotiable. They are aware of the challenges stemming from systemic oppression and are less willing to maintain the status quo. This generation pushes back on binary thinking in matters related to identity and embraces upending past thinking in the journey toward global justice.

The business case for DEIJA strategies still exists and is more urgent than ever. The pandemic taught us that there is not an unlimited labor supply. We must address the needs of our labor force, especially considering the higher representation of Black and Brown individuals in the human services workforce compared to other industries in Massachusetts. Indeed, all organizations are competing for the talents of the best and

brightest of all potential employees. By incorporating DEIJA principles and strategies into the hiring and recruitment process, organizations can decrease the likelihood that bias may exclude talented individuals and increase their chances of hiring the most talented people.

Further, while dissenters have argued that all things DEIJA are too costly, the truth is the cost of not investing in DEIJA has proven far greater. Research from McKinsey & Company has shown that companies that prioritize diversity often experience greater performance and profitability: "Research has repeatedly shown that gender and ethnic diversity, inclusion and performance go hand in hand. Our latest report, *Diversity*

Wins: How Inclusion Matters, reinforces the business case. Over the past five years, the likelihood that diverse companies will out-earn their industry peers has grown. The evidence from past crises shows that diversity can also play a significant role in recovery, for example, several reports have shown that in the 2008-09 global fiscal crisis, banks with a higher share of women on their boards were more stable than their peers."

It is a changing world. Societies are growing and evolving. The cultural construct of gender has moved beyond the binary and there are increasing numbers of employees who are "out" as trans/non-binary. The shocking rise in anti-trans legislation points to how much progress has been made and

how fierce the backlash is. Biases against these and other marginalized identities must not be accepted.

Providing inclusive, welcoming workplaces where employees can bring their whole selves creates an environment where our workforce can have a true sense of belonging. Besides all the benefits listed, it is the right thing to do. Being on the right side of history is where we will be as we dedicate ourselves to justice for all. As part of The Caring Force, it is our duty and our privilege to promote and uphold DEIJA principles in all that we do.

Felicia Heywood is the executive vice president of DEI at BAMS and Sonia D'Alarcao is the vice president of DEI at BAMS.

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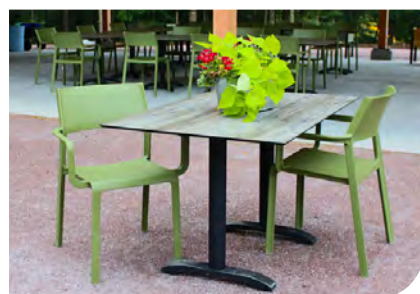


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A VIEW FROM THE HILL

*A commentary from a
legislator on human services*



Human services workers in Western Mass. must be heard

By Sen. Paul Mark

Massachusetts is a small state when considered against the immense size of the United States. Our small size does not limit our diversity, and that is true whether we are talking about demographics, economic or educational status, spoken languages or even the divide between rural and urban communities. Most people in Massachusetts live in urban or suburban communities and the state's budgeting, laws and policies reflect that fact. This can make life in rural areas of the state seem distant and forgotten to those living in our population centers, despite the small distances between the borders of Massachusetts.

Representing 57 cities and towns in Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden, and Hampshire counties – the four western counties of Massachusetts – can be a daunting task. The ability to stay connected with 170,000 people spread over a distance greater than the state of Rhode Island takes a lot of effort and time as a legislator and presents unique issues for residents, service providers and government officials alike. The lack of access to public transportation, the improving but still lagging availability of adequate telecommunications services and the scarcity of local financial resources that impact the most basic local services, such as schools, ambulance services and police and fire departments, all have an impact on our quality of life and our ability to thrive and compete in a rapidly changing world.

Human service workers in these rural regions overcome these unique challenges every day to provide quality services to their clients, but that is never an easy task and requires a great deal of commitment. Our local bus services do not run at night or at the weekends, which means you need to own a car so you can get to work. Population densities are low, and houses are spread out, which means racking up miles and spending a lot of money to fuel a vehicle. Cell phone service is sporadic in some spots and completely unreliable in others, which means a lack of access to voice, text, and email services on and off the job. It is our duty as legislators, colleagues, peers, and neighbors to do all that we can to highlight these challenges and attempt to level the playing field so that all can have an opportunity to succeed.

I have the privilege of sitting as a member of the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities for the first time in my legislative career. This is an important committee that oversees so many bills

that are of immense importance to human service providers throughout my district. One of the most frequent concerns I hear from my constituents goes beyond any individual bill or policy piece to a general worry: "Are we being heard in Boston, and do they even know we exist?" This was a topic that was brought up while I was offering remarks at the UCP of Western Massachusetts's annual meeting. I made a commitment that night to make sure their voices were being heard at the State House and I was thrilled to be able to deliver on that promise by bringing our committee chair, Sen. Robyn Kennedy of Worcester, to the Berkshires for a series of visits.

Sen. Kennedy took the time to make a day full of stops at human service providers throughout the Berkshires, including United Cerebral Palsy, the Berkshire County Arc and 18 Degrees. She was generous with her time and the local organizations were eager to show her their work and explain the unique challenges they face in western Massachusetts. Transportation issues came up often. Accessibility issues and the ability to effectively compete for and retain workers, provide educational opportunities, and ensure that clients are receiving the best services possible were also repeat topics of interest. Sen. Kennedy listened and learned but could also relate due to her extensive firsthand experience in the field before her election to the Senate. Our region felt heard and appreciated and my constituents were reminded that advocacy is important and effective.

We are approaching the time of year when the next state budget will be considered and several bills that have stalled suddenly start moving at breakneck speed. This is a valuable time to remind the people of Massachusetts that your voice does matter, and your advocacy can impact what happens at the State House. By staying in touch with your legislators you can all influence policy and bridge the many gaps that exist across the state. Working together and learning about our differences keeps Massachusetts a true Commonwealth that benefits all residents.

Sen. Paul Mark represents the Berkshire, Hampden, Franklin and Hampshire District in the Massachusetts Senate.



Sen. Paul Mark

The opinions expressed in A View from the Hill and Viewpoints from Across the State are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of the Providers' Council or its members.



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MLK: Members celebrate civil rights leader throughout month

Continued from Page 1

packages for local shelters and people experiencing homelessness.

CSR founders, Rev. Richard Richardson and Mrs. Jestina Richardson also received the Drum Major Award at the 54th Annual Martin Luther King Memorial Breakfast for their extraordinary contributions to justice, diversity, and inclusion efforts in Boston. Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD) also participated in the Boston MLK Breakfast, the longest-running celebration of its kind in the US.

In addition to compiling and sharing a list of events happening throughout Boston in January to cel-

brate Dr. King's life and social justice work, the Pine Street Inn staff choir performed "Lift Every Voice and Sing" on MLK Day as a tribute to the civil rights leader.

On MLK Day, staff and individuals from Open Sky Community Services took part in a day of service at the Pakachoag Center in Auburn to decorate lunch bags for Meal on Wheels, assemble activity books for children and resource books for families. In addition, they made no-sew scarves for those in need. Open Sky staff also attended the 39th Annual Community Breakfast honoring The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. at Assumption College.



Children's Services of Roxbury President and CEO Sandra M. McCroom poses with the nonprofit founders Reverend Richard Richardson and Mrs. Jestina Richardson at the 54th Annual Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Breakfast.

BILL: Council stands behind A.H.A

Continued from Page 1

sands of residents who depend on this sector to receive essential care," the Council wrote.

The Council's testimony highlighted that a report released last May by the University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute - *Essential or Not? The Critical Need for Human Services Workers* - which found that the median income of human services workers is just \$34,273, more than \$15,000 less than the median income for the state overall. Additionally, it found that more than 1 in 6 human services workers are classified as low-income, defined as earning less than 200% of the federal poverty level, making it incredibly difficult for human services workers to find affordable housing.

The Council urged members of the committee to report the bill favorably, noting that in addition to easing the

burdens of human services workers, the bill will help the human services sector combat historic problems with recruitment and retention of employees while providing continuity of care for all residents in need and, particular, our state's most vulnerable residents.

"The high cost of housing in Massachusetts not only hurts those working in human services, but it also hinders our sector's ability to hire and retain skilled workers, resulting in vulnerable populations being put on extended waitlists or missing out entirely on services for critical care, putting their lives at risk," the Council wrote.

Healey herself testified to the committee that recruitment efforts across the state have been hindered by high housing costs, saying, "I want people staying in Massachusetts, I want people thriving in Massachusetts. But the lack of affordable housing is getting in our way."

LOANS: Applications close Feb. 26

Continued from Page 1

home-based or community-based human service organization located in Massachusetts.

Eligible professionals include but are not limited to certified nursing assistants, homemakers, family partners, educators and educator assistants, home health aides, developmental specialists, personal care attendants/aides, case managers, companions and licensed clinicians.

Additionally, to be eligible applicants work must work at an organization funded or licensed by one of the following state agencies:

- MassHealth
- Executive Office of Elder Affairs
- Department of Public Health
- Department of Mental Health
- Department of Developmental Services
- Department of Youth Services

- Department of Children and Families
- Department of Transitional Assistance
- Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission
- Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
- Massachusetts Commission for the Blind
- Executive Office of Veterans Services
- Office for Refugee and Immigrants
- Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities; and
- Department of Early Education and Care

For more information on who is eligible and how to apply for the program, visit marepay.org. Council members with questions are encouraged to reach out to bill@providers.org.



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CALENDAR OF EVENTS • SPRING 2024

What: **Teeth and Money Matter: Providers' Council Exclusive Members Only Delta Dental Plan**
When: Thursday, February 15
Time: 11 a.m. to 12 p.m.
Presenters: Michelle Martone, USI
 Lauren Bushey, Delta Dental
Where: Online via Zoom
Cost: Free; Event for Council Provider Members only

What: **Success as a New Supervisor**
When: Tuesdays, February 27 & March 5
Time: 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Presenters: Jim Ognibene, Visioneer Consulting
Where: Day I: Providers' Council office
 Day II: Online via Zoom
Cost: \$180 for members; \$360 for nonmembers

What: **Certificate in Supervision Series**
When: Wednesdays, February 28, March 13 & 28
 April 10 & 24, May 8
Time: 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Presenters: Jim Ognibene, Visioneer Consulting
 Ginny Maglio, Optimum Development
 Comma Williams, Comma Williams Enterprises
Where: Online via Zoom
Cost: \$700 for members; \$1,000 for nonmembers

Pre-registration for these events is required unless otherwise noted.

Please visit providers.org/events to learn more and register for the event you wish to attend.

Questions? Call 508.598.9800 or email Nina Walat at nwalat@providers.org.

BUDGET: Healey allocates record funds into Chapter 257 line item

Continued from Page 1

Providers' Council President and CEO Bill Yelenak. "With these funds, community-based human services providers will be able to increase the critically low wages of their workers, who care for over 160,000 of the Commonwealth's most vulnerable residents."

According to the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, there is an additional \$95 million in the Legislature's previous economic development bill for human services rates in FY '25 that was already approved in that spending plan.

Among other highlights in the budget proposal were a 54.63% increase to *HomeBASE* (DHCD line item 7004-0108), a 57.21% increase to *Family Support & Stabilization* (DCF line item 4800-0040) and a 21.79% increase to *Respite Family Supports* (DDS line item 5920-3000). *Emergency Assistance - Family Shelter and Services* (DHCD line item 7004-0101) remained level funded at \$325 million from the FY '24 budget, though the administration has previously told the Legislature it will need more than \$900 million annually this year and next year to pay for the unprecedented demand in the shelter system.

Other items of interest include:

- **EEC line item 3000-3060** – *DCF and DTA Related Childcare* – rose from \$346.6 million to \$356.6 million, an increase of 2.89%.
- **MRC line item 4120-2000** – *Vocational Rehabilitation for People with Disabilities* – increased from \$25.9 million to \$26.2 million, an increase of 1.29%.
- **DTA line item 4401-1000** – *Employment Services Program* – dropped from \$19.9 million to \$18.4 million, a decrease of 7.71%.
- **DPH line item 4512-0103** – *HIV/AIDS Prevention Treatment and Services* – decreased 16.02%, dropping from \$35 million to \$29.4 million. The administration noted the funding decreased as it eliminated FY '24 one-time costs and decreased funding to meet projected need.
- **DPH line item 4513-1020** – *Early Intervention Services* – decreased 27.97%, dropping from \$42.9 million to \$30.9 million. Again, the administration noted the funding decreased as it eliminated FY '24 one-time costs.
- **DCF line item 4800-0041** – *Congregate Care Services* – rose from \$431 million to \$495.9 million, an increase of over 15%.
- **DCF line item 4800-0200** – *DCF Family Resource Centers* – decreased 19.14%, dropping from \$33.8 million to \$27.3 million. The administration noted the funding decreased as it eliminated FY '24 one-time costs and decreased funding to meet projected need.
- **DMH line item 5095-0015** – *Inpatient Facilities and Community-Based Mental Health* – rose from \$316.4 million to \$385.3 million, an increase of 21.8%.
- **DDS line item 5920-2000** – *Community Residential Services* – dropped from \$1.72 billion to \$1.69 billion, a 1% decrease.
- **DDS line item 5920-3000** – *Respite Family Supports* – rose from \$98.1 million to \$119.4 million, an increase of 21.79%.
- **DHCD line item 7004-9024** – *Mass. Rental Voucher Program* – rose from \$179.6 million to \$219 million, an increase of 21.96%.



Peter Moser



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