

MDDC Public Policy Committee Meeting

Aug 11th, 2026





Meeting Poll Link

Upon leaving the meeting,
please respond to survey below.

We use your feedback to improve
the experience and the
information we share.



[CLICK HERE](#)

- Welcome/Introductions
- State Legislative Update
- State Budget Update
- Federal Update
- Coalition Updates
- Council & Community Events
- Partner Updates
- Public Comment

AGENDA





MASSACHUSETTS DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL



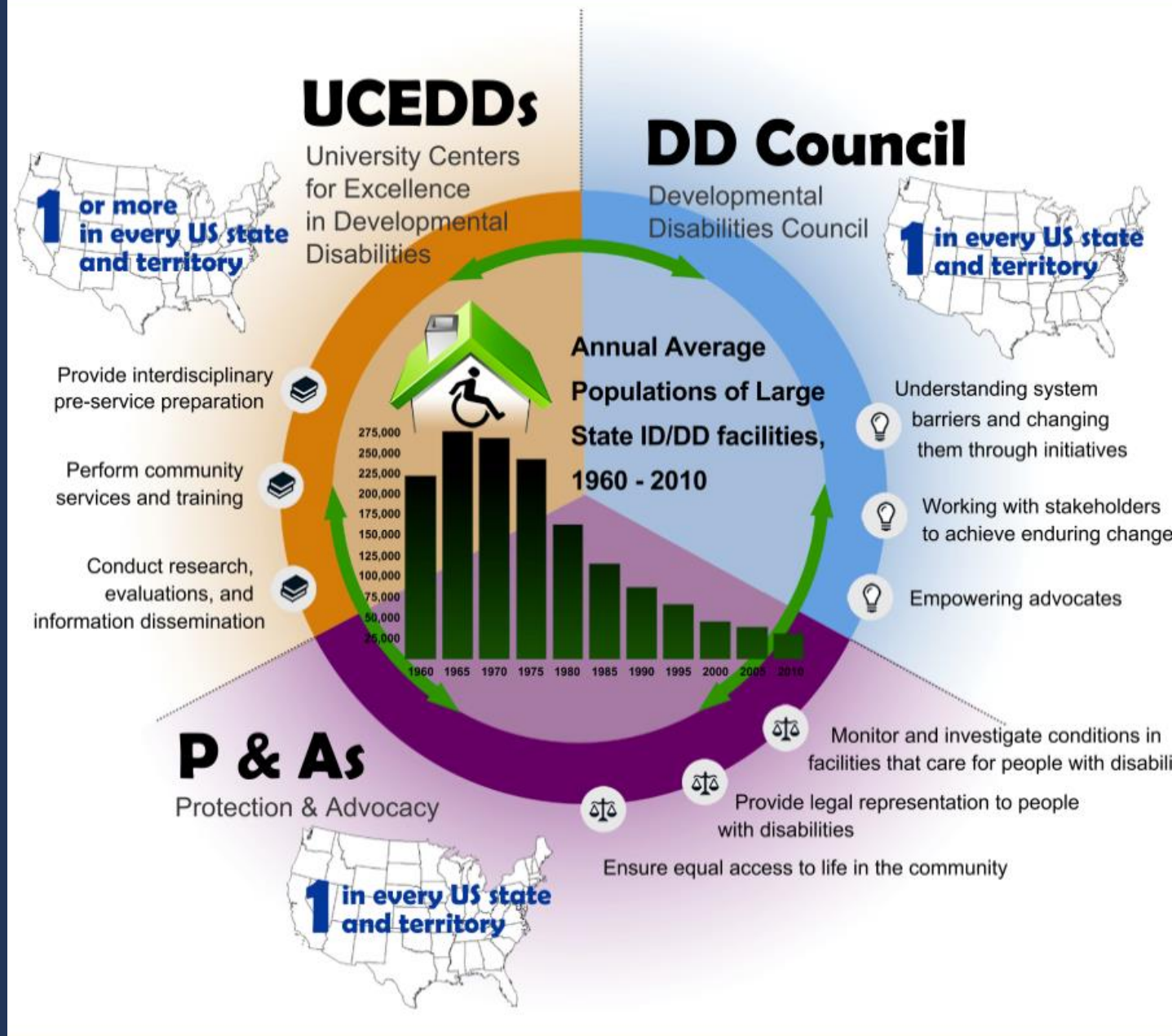
MDDC Mission

Our mission is to provide opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities and families to enhance independence, productivity and inclusion.



The Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000 (DD Act)

- Establishment of state DD networks
- Federally funded DD programs in every state and territory - mandated with supporting people with DD and their families





MDDC Policy Team



**Gyasi
Burks-Abbott**

Public Policy
Committee Chairperson



Destiny Maxam

Policy Coordinator



Kaitlin Stober

Policy Research
Associate



Rick Glassman

Legal Disability
Policy Analyst



Jennifer Bertrand

Deputy Director



State Legislative Update



State Legislative Update



- End of Legislative session was 7/31
- New joint rules
- While formal session has ended, informal session is still ongoing through Jan 5th
- Exceptions are bills extended through 12/31

Wins This Session

Blue Envelope Bill

Archaic Language Bill

Amendment 5 to S3171

Turning 22 Bill

Equal Access to Public Education
Bill



Snapshot Status of MDDC Priority Legislation

....as of August 10th, 2026





Bills Likely to Move Forward

MDDC Priority Bills

- Supported Decision Making (H.4852/S.155)
- Wheelchair Repair (H.4358/S.2662)
- Standards of Care (H.242/S.149)

MDDC Endorsed Bills

- Nicky's Law (H.243/S.139)

[MDDC Priority and Endorsed legislation linked here!](#)



Bills Less Likely to Move

MDDC Priority Bills

- AHVP Bills (H.1481/S.1004)
- AAB Bill (H.2569)
- Funding Levels Direct Care Workforce (H.2104/S.1325)
- Family Members as Caregivers (H.1394/S. died)
- Universal Changing Stations (H.4851/S.102)
- Medically Frail Children, (H.1366/ S.866)

MDDC Endorsed

- Hearing Aid Bill (H.4959)
- De-escalation Training in Student Transportation, (H.736/S.435)
- Athletic Activities, (H.602)

[MDDC Priority and Endorsed Legislation can be found here!](#)



Bills w/ Unclear Path Forward

MDDC Priority Bills

- Federal Definition of IDD (H.276/S.150)
- Transition Planning, (H.752/S.313)
- Health Discrimination (H.1360/S.869)

**MDDC Fact Sheet: H.276/S.150 –
Adopting the federal definition of DD**

MDDC Endorsed Bills

- Closed Caption in Public Areas, (S101)
- Ensuring Equal Access to Medical Treatments, (H.1351/S.871)

**[MDDC Priority and Endorsed
Legislation can be found here!](#)**



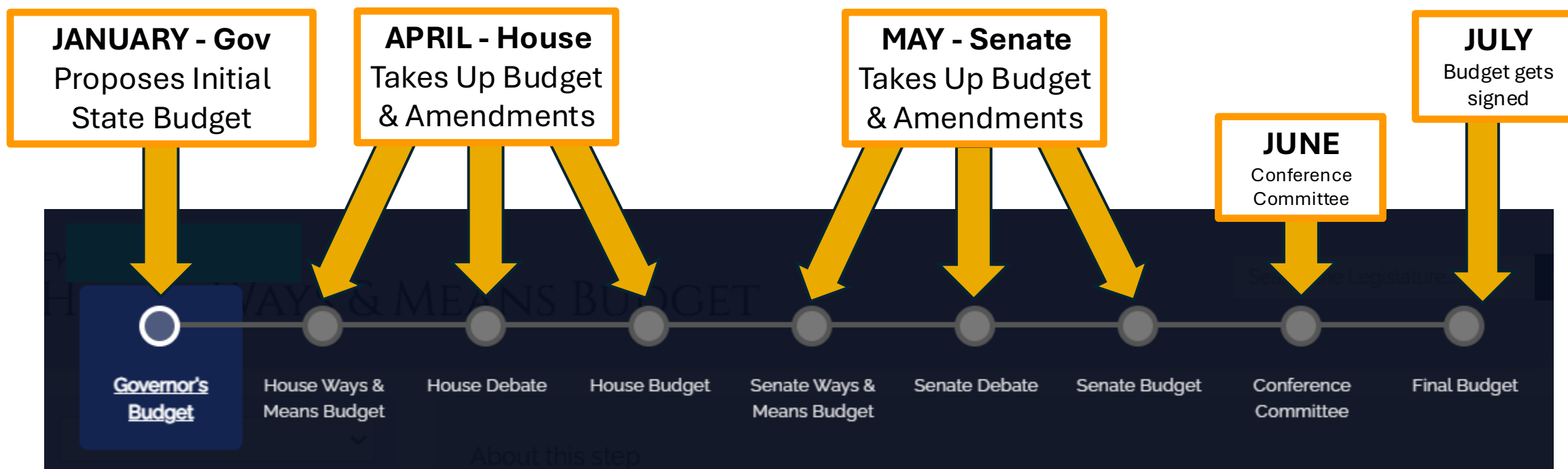
Other Bill updates

- **H.4959** *An Act relative to health insurance coverage for hearing aids* July 9th, 2026:
 - Moved out of HFC favorably to HWM
- **H.4852** *An Act relative to SDM agreements for certain adults* August 10, 2026:
 - Reported favorably to House Ways & Means
- **H.1394** *family members serving as caregivers* June 15, 2026:
 - Extended until **July 31, 2026**
- **H 5038** *improve patient access to non-emergency medical transportation* July 9th, 2026
 - Reported favorably to HWM



State Budget Update

State Budget Timeline



[CLICK HERE](#)
to learn more
about the state
budget process.



A Snapshot of the Final Budget Picture

- Strengthened language protecting the state's commitment to Chapter 257 rates, though additional funding is still needed to fully reach the 53rd percentile benchmark.
- Budget language prevents proposed PCA cuts from moving forward until the stakeholder working group completes its recommendations.
- DESE-DDS Residential Placement Prevention Program Increased by **\$1.2 million**, bringing total funding to **\$11.7 million**.



Budget Continued

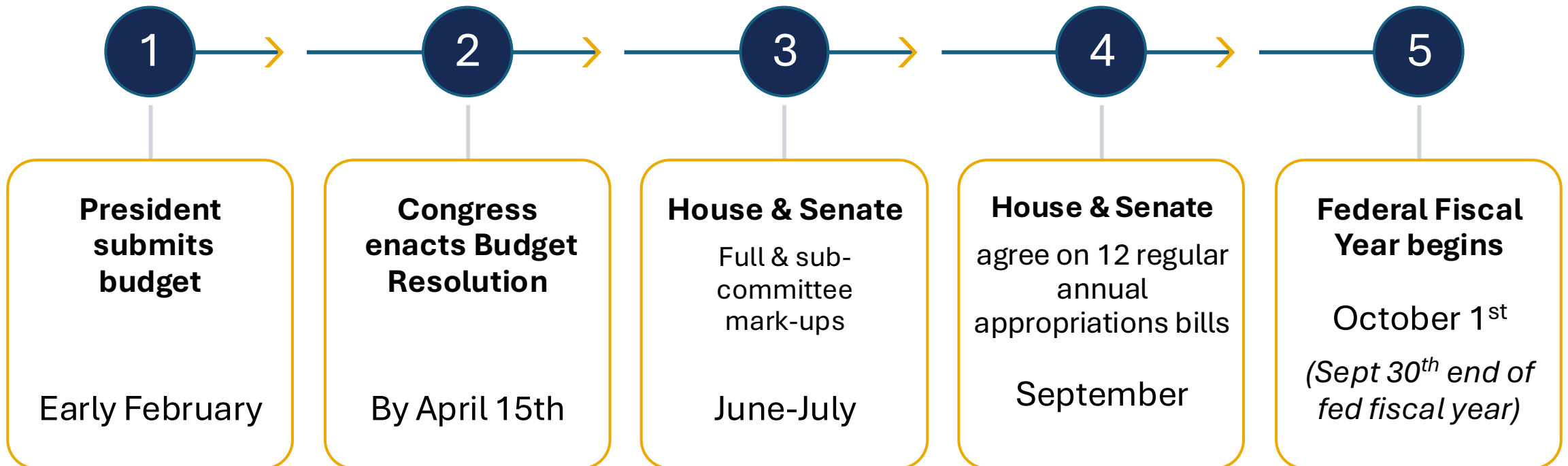
- Establishes a **Turning 22 Stakeholder Commission**.
 - Brings families, agencies, and people with lived experience together to improve the transition from school to adult services.
- Funding for **workforce training initiatives** for programs serving those with complex, challenging behaviors.
- Despite a challenging fiscal year, the FY27 budget preserved several key disability supports while making targeted investments in workforce stability, transition services, healthcare education, and community-based supports.



Federal Update



Federal (Budget) Appropriations Timeline





Federal Appropriations

Appropriations means money that is set aside by Congress for a specific purpose.

Reconciliation bills change laws about taxes and how the government spends money. These changes are made to match the goals of the federal budget.

Basically - Congress uses reconciliation bills to make big budget-related changes fast, mostly when the majority party doesn't have enough senators to pass them under normal rules.

- Congress has passed 2 reconciliation bills this session.
- Efforts to pass a 3rd reconciliation bill have been delayed.
- NACDD secured level funding for DD Councils & DD Act programs in House Labor HHS Appropriations Committee.
- The U.S. House and Senate has adjourned for an August 2026 recess.

Federal Appropriations



A continuing resolution (CR) is a short-term agreement to keep paying the bills for federal agencies.

A CR allows federal agencies to keep operating without major cuts and stops a government shutdown.

A government shutdown happens when Congress and the President do not pass new budget bills or a temporary funding law.

The OMB rule — officially called the Regulation for Federal Financial Assistance — is controversial because it would change how the U.S. government awards billions of dollars in federal grants, giving political appointees far more control.

So, what's next?

- There are big differences between the House and Senate on:
 - Funding levels
 - Policy priorities
- The House and Senate each passed a continuing resolution (CR) to keep the federal government funded (through Dec. 8th and 11th) to stop a midterm election govt shutdown.
- The Senate's CR delays a controversial OMB grants rule. The House must adopt or modify it before the end of the fiscal year.



Federal Medicaid Funding Update

H.R.1/The One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBA)

- Cuts nearly \$1 trillion from Medicaid over ten years
- Some changes impact states and providers (limitations on state directed payments & provider tax cuts)
- Some changes directly impact beneficiaries
 - (lawful) immigrant eligibility changes
 - Home equity limits/caps
 - Retroactive period reduced
 - Some service Co-pays
 - Work requirements
 - More frequent renewals

[MDDC Federal Medicaid Funding Fact Sheet](#)



H.R.1 Work Requirements & Interim Final Rule (IFR) Released June 1st

Work requirements mean people must prove that they have a job and have worked a certain number of hours every month. They are also sometimes called community engagement requirements.

- The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) released an **interim final rule (IFR)** that tells states how they should handle exemptions for work requirements created under H.R.1 (the One Big Beautiful Bill Act).
- H.R.1 includes work requirements for adults ages 19 through 64 to receive Medicaid benefits.
- The IFR clarifies who is exempt for these work requirements and what Medicaid beneficiaries would have to do to qualify for an exemption.

[ASAN Medicaid Work Requirements Easy Explainer](#)

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/the-2026-medicaid-summit>

[CMS Launches Nationwide Framework to Implement Medicaid Work Requirements | CMS](#)



More on the IFR and “Medically Frail”

“A coalition of officials from 25 states and Washington, D.C. filed a lawsuit last week challenging recently released rules for Medicaid work requirements.”

<https://www.disabilityscoop.com/2026/07/06/trump-administration-sued-over-medicaid-changes/32070/>

- The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) new interim final rule (IFR) exempts
 - people who are “medically frail”
 - have “special medical needs”
 - people with physical, intellectual or developmental disabilities
- However, the IFR is more restrictive than Congress intended.
- 25 states are now legally challenging the new IFR.



Find out if you are affected...

<https://www.mass.gov/federal-changes-affecting-masshealth-medicaid-members>

Federal Changes Affecting MassHealth (Medicaid) Members

- The Trump Administration is making changes to Medicaid programs across the country.
- Learn how they affect MassHealth members.
- These changes will **NOT** impact most MassHealth members.
- MassHealth will reach out to you directly if you are affected.



6 Month Medicaid Eligibility Renewals

Beginning January 1, 2027, the federal government will require some MassHealth members to renew their coverage every 6 months instead of every 12 months.

- MassHealth will contact you if you need to renew every 6 months.
- Members who are affected will be notified through mailed paper notices, texts, emails, and more.
- Report changes to MassHealth:
 - You **must** report changes to your address, email, income, or phone number to MassHealth.
 - You must also report these changes for others on your health plan.

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/more-frequent-renewals-for-masshealth-members>



Texas v. Kennedy

Read more at:

[DREDF](#)

[Disability Scoop](#)



Department of Justice Olmstead Memo



Department of Justice (DOJ) Memo Challenges Olmstead Court Decision

- U.S. Department of Justice memo says states have NO legal obligation to serve people with developmental disabilities in the community.
- This opinion is different than all other opinions and the 1999 Supreme Court Decision which said that states are required to provide services in the most integrated setting, where this is possible, appropriate and not opposed by the individual.
- Advocates are concerned that this memo is trying to take away the rights for people with disabilities — the right to receive services in their own homes and communities.

[Trump Administration Claims People With Disabilities Don't Have Right To Community-Based Services - Disability Scoop](#)



DOJ Announces Will No Longer Enforce Olmstead Ruling

On July 29, 2026, the Department of Justice (DOJ) announced it will NO longer enforce its own guidance around the Olmstead ruling – the right for people with disabilities to live in the community.

“That ruling — the backbone of an understanding that people with disabilities should have the opportunity to live in their communities — underpins decades of civil-rights litigation and is largely responsible for the proliferation of home- and community-based alternatives to institutionalization. And because those options have been more widely available, states have significantly reduced the number of people living in institutions or closed them altogether.”

[Trump DOJ upends disability rights guidance - POLITICO](#)



State-Level Olmstead Advocacy

- In response to the recent DOJ Memo and ongoing Texas v. Kennedy Lawsuit state advocacy organizations are circulating sign-on letters governors and attorney generals. Signing would indicate their commitment to uphold Olmstead.
- In late July 2026 NACDD established an Olmstead focus group to develop DD Council network state strategies to respond to potential impacts on HCBS and community integration. Plain language resources will be available soon.
- Multiple states are advancing Olmstead Plan strategies to help ensure community integration for people with disabilities.

[Massachusetts Olmstead Plan | Mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massachusetts-olmstead-plan)



U.S. Department of Education (DOE) Changes



Ed Department Deal to Offload Special Education

- Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, or OSERS will be moved to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).
- U.S. Department of Ed held a call with disability advocates. Advocates are still concerned there is no plan how this will work and it will create chaos.
- Moving OSERS to HHS reinforces outdated ideas that disability is a medical problem to be fixed.
- Special education is an education issue.

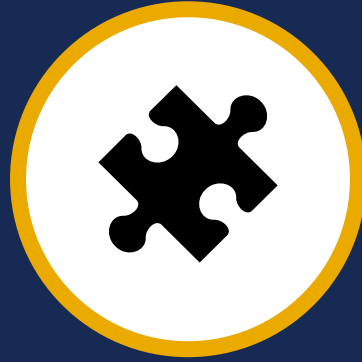
[Ed Department Details Plans To Outsource Special Education, Relocate Staff - Disability Scoop](#)

[Ed Department Strikes Deal To Offload Special Education - Disability Scoop](#)



U.S. Department of Ed Plan to Move the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) to Department of Justice

- The Office of Civil Rights (OCR) handles discrimination complaints for students with disabilities and families.
- Advocates are concerned moving the OCR to the Department of Justice (DOJ) will reduce federal oversight to make states follow IDEA and state laws public schools follow.
- This could make it harder for students with disabilities and families to make public schools provide a free and appropriate public education (FAPE).



Federal Autism Update



Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee (IACC)

- The Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee, or IACC meeting has been rescheduled for late August 2026.
- The IACC will set a new deadline for extended public comment on a [new draft strategic plan](#).
- The strategic plan is the IACC's primary responsibility.
- The strategic plan provides recommendations to the Secretary of Health and Human Services on autism research, services, supports and more.

[After Uproar, Feds Back Off Rushed Effort To Approve New Autism Plan - Disability Scoop](#)



Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee (IACC) Cont.

- HHS Secretary Kennedy made some BIG changes to the IACC's membership.
- Some of the nation's leading autism groups were removed from the committee and replaced with new members who have a history of criticizing vaccines and other questionable approaches.
- There are now less autism self-advocates on the new IACC (only 3 down from 7).
- After 1 public meeting the new IACC members developed the new strategic plan in private.
- We will share information and a link to comment on the new IACC plan when it is available.

[RFK Jr. Overhauls Federal Autism Panel - Disability Scoop](#)



Renewed CDC Criticism Over Autism & Vaccines

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) updated a key page on its website in July 2026 about autism and vaccines, suggesting that the science is unsettled.
- Advocates think the recent website page changes are problematic.
- Before November 2025, the page read, “studies have shown that there is no link between receiving vaccines and developing autism.”
- Then in November of 2025 it read, “The claim ‘vaccines do not cause autism’ is not an evidence-based claim because studies have not ruled out the possibility that infant vaccines cause autism.”

[CDC Faces Renewed Criticism Over Stance On Autism, Vaccines - Disability Scoop](#)



Renewed CDC Criticism Over Autism & Vaccines

- Back in mid-July the CDC website page was changed to say, “Scientists have not identified the root causes of autism. HHS continues to support rigorous scientific research and will update this page as reliable new evidence becomes available.”
- Advocates are concerned because the new information posted on the page by the CDC still gives false ideas about the evidence.
- Advocates are saying it is false to say that scientists don’t know what causes autism. Scientists know a lot about its causes and genetics play an important role.



Coalition Updates

PCA Program updates

Tamara Huntley





Temporary Protected Status

- Temporary Protected Status (TPS) means an individual from a different country has been granted a temporary work authorization while applying for a green-card or citizenship
- Changes in federal law regarding Temporary Protected status for Haiti
- In June the Supreme Court issued a decision allowing the Trump administration to end TPS for Haiti.



Temporary Protected Status cont...

- Unless able to provide proof of work authorization through another source, people from Haiti will no longer be able to work as a PCA/DCW (direct care worker)
- Losing this portion of the workforce makes it even harder to get and retain PCA's when there is already a workforce shortage



Changes to the New Hire Process (NHP)

Current

- Consumer employer submits the required new hire paperwork forms to tempus
- A PCA begins working immediately before the new hire paperwork is processed.
- PCA are working Before they are assigned a unique ID number.

Future

- PCA has to be verified using E verify. Cannot start working until confirmation of employment eligibility
- New hire paperwork has to be processed and completed
- A unique ID will be established for the PCA
- PCA's will be sent a letter by mail that includes their new hire date And PCA start date



Resources

- **Immigration Legal Help Desk: ori-helpdesk@mass.gov**
- **Immigration Helpline: (508) 293-1871**
- **Tempus Unlimited fiscal intermediary: mafms@tempusunlimited.org or call (877) 479-7577**
- **Link to PCA Council meetings: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/pca-workforce-general-council-meeting-schedule-for-cy2026>**
- **My contact info: Tamara Huntley tamara.huntley2@mass.gov**



REV UP! Update

Brianna Zimmerman

Voting Rights Advocate
Disability Law Center, Inc.



[Bill of Voting Rights - REV UP!](#)

National Updates





Background of Supreme Court Case: *Watson v. Republican National Committee (RNC)*

- **Background:** Mississippi along with many other states, including Massachusetts, will count mail-in ballots that arrive after Election Day **if they are postmarked (sent out) on or before Election Day.**
- Even if you mail your ballot before Election Day, there is a chance it will arrive after Election Day.
- States usually make their own rules on deadlines for returned mail-in ballots.





Argument in *Watson v. RNC*

- The **plaintiffs** (people who started the lawsuit) included the RNC, Mississippi Republican Party, and two individuals.
- The plaintiffs argued that it is against federal law to count ballots returned after Election Day. This is why they sued the state of Mississippi.





Decision in *Watson v. RNC*

- The Supreme Court decided that Mississippi was allowed to count ballots that are postmarked on or before Election Day. This **is not** against federal law.
- **Important because:**
 - Around 30 states count ballots received **after Election Day if they are postmarked by Election Day**: including Massachusetts. If the Court ruled this was illegal, these rules would have been questioned in many other states.
 - Many people with disabilities rely on vote by mail because it is more accessible to them.
 - Stricter requirements would make voting by mail more challenging, confusing, and lead to some people's votes not being counted (even if they mailed their ballots on time and did everything else right).

Check out this [Arc article on *Watson v. RNC*](#)





United States Postal Service (USPS) Proposal on Vote by Mail: Background on Executive Order

- Trump issued an **Executive Order** in March: wanting to create national voter list. USPS would not deliver mail-in ballots to people who are not on the list.
- Many states challenged that Executive Order in a federal lawsuit in MA in June.
- Courts agreed to block the Executive Order (so that vote by mail process would not change).
- Trump **appealed** (asked those decisions to be checked by a higher court).





USPS Proposed Changes

- The USPS announced a proposal in June saying they were planning on implementing Trump's Executive Order.
- Many lawmakers and Governors are writing to the USPS asking them to not follow Trump's order.
- Heads of USPS said they were following court rulings that blocked Trump's Executive Order.
- Postal workers union is **opposed to the proposed rules**, says postal workers should not be in charge of deciding who can and cannot vote by mail.
- Check out this [PBS article about the proposed rule changes](#)





What does this mean for voting by mail in Massachusetts?

- For now, rules have not changed and USPS should not be blocking any ballots from being delivered.
- It is still recommended that **people apply to vote by mail as early as possible**: 2 – 3 weeks before an election.
- If you do not receive your ballot, you should contact your local election office (or Secretary of State's office if your local election office is not helpful).
 - [Find your local election office](#)
 - Contact the Secretary of State's Elections Division:
[1-800-462-VOTE \(8683\)](tel:1-800-462-VOTE)
Using TTY at [1-800-720-3480](tel:1-800-720-3480)
Email at elections@sec.state.ma.us





Upcoming Election Information: Important Deadlines

- **Voter Registration Deadline for Primary: Saturday August 22, 2026**
 - [Register online](#) if you have a current Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV)-issued I.D.
 - [Register by mail](#)
 - Register in-person at [your local election office](#) (also known as Town Hall, City Hall, Elections Department, Registrar of Voters, etc.) or [Secretary of State's offices](#) (Boston, Springfield and Fall River)
- **Vote by Mail Application Deadline for Primary: by 5 PM on Tuesday August 25, 2026**
 - [Apply online](#)
 - [Apply by mail](#)
 - Apply in-person at your [local election office](#)





Election Information: Important Dates

- **Primary Early Voting: Saturday August 22 – Friday August 28**
 - Contact your election office for locations and hours
- **Primary Election Day: Tuesday September 1**
 - Polls are open 7 AM – 8 PM across the state
 - [Find upcoming election information](#)





Your Rights

- You have the right to vote privately
- You have the right to vote accessibly (and your polling place should be accessible)
- You have the right to vote independently
- You have the right to get help with voting or registering to vote





What to Do if You Experience Issues

- **For immediate help:**
 - Contact your local election office or head of your polling place first. They may be able to fix the issue quickly.
 - You may also contact the Secretary of State's office:
[1-800-462-VOTE \(8683\)](tel:1-800-462-VOTE)
Using TTY at [1-800-720-3480](tel:1-800-720-3480)
Email at elections@sec.state.ma.us
 - Contact 866-OUR-VOTE national hotline.
- **DLC may not be able to help immediately on Election Day, but we want to know if voters with disabilities experience issues with voting.**



Get Involved



- Visit [our website](#)
- [Sign up for the REV UP MA email list](#) for volunteer opportunities and future events
- We are looking for volunteers to hold voter registration drives and make sure polling places are accessible
- [Find out more about polling place accessibility surveys](#)
- **Contact** info@revupma.org with any questions



Contact Disability Law Center

Brianna Zimmerman
(she/her/hers)

Voting Rights Advocate
Disability Law Center, Inc.
Phone: 617-315-4593

Email:
bzimmerman@dlc-ma.org

Contact DLC

[Ask for help online](#)

Intake Phone: 617-723-8455



Mass Advocates for Children





GAIN Update

Guardianship Alternatives Innovation Network



Guardianship Alternatives Innovation Network (GAIN)



- GAIN is led by MDDC and has a focus on guardianship alternatives
- GAIN began as the Guardianship Working Group (GWG) years ago and initially focused on guardianship issues that arose out of a Crocker fellowship.
- In January 2024, members decided to target 3 primary areas: data, training, and a least restrictive framework and/or alternatives.

[Guardianship Alternatives and
Innovation Network \(GAIN\) | Mass.gov](#)



GAIN Training Team Update



Presenters
Craig Kinney & Sandy Heller

Via Skype
Betsy Johnson Medical Ethicist

**Unraveling the Mysteries
of Guardianship
Alternatives**
Morning Workshop
Presentation
at the
2026 Independent Living Conference
September 23rd
at the Best Western Sovereign
Registration is open

[Register for MASILC Conference](#)



Council & Community Events



Events MDDC Attended

- Medicaid Summit
- PCA Advocacy/Education Day
- Blue Envelope Bill Signing
- Community Living Initiative: 1 Year Celebration
- QAP Housing Celebration
- Letter Drop offs
- ADA Day 2026



Medicaid Summit: Part 1



Chrissy and Kaitlin working tech!

Photos from Medicaid Summit on June 10th, 2026.



MDDC Staff attending Medicaid Summit



Medicaid Summit: Part 2

Media Coverage on Medicaid Summit



[The 2026 Medicaid Summit | Mass.gov](#)

Community Living Initiative: 1 Year Celebration



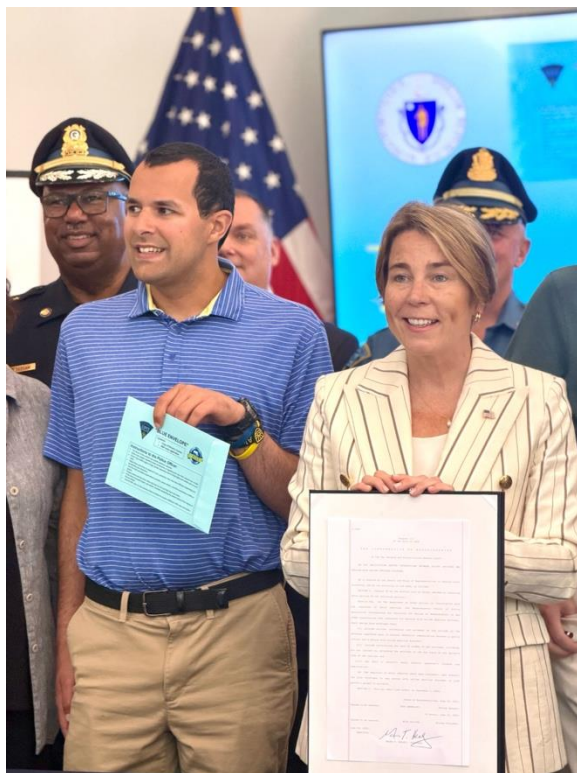
PCA Day



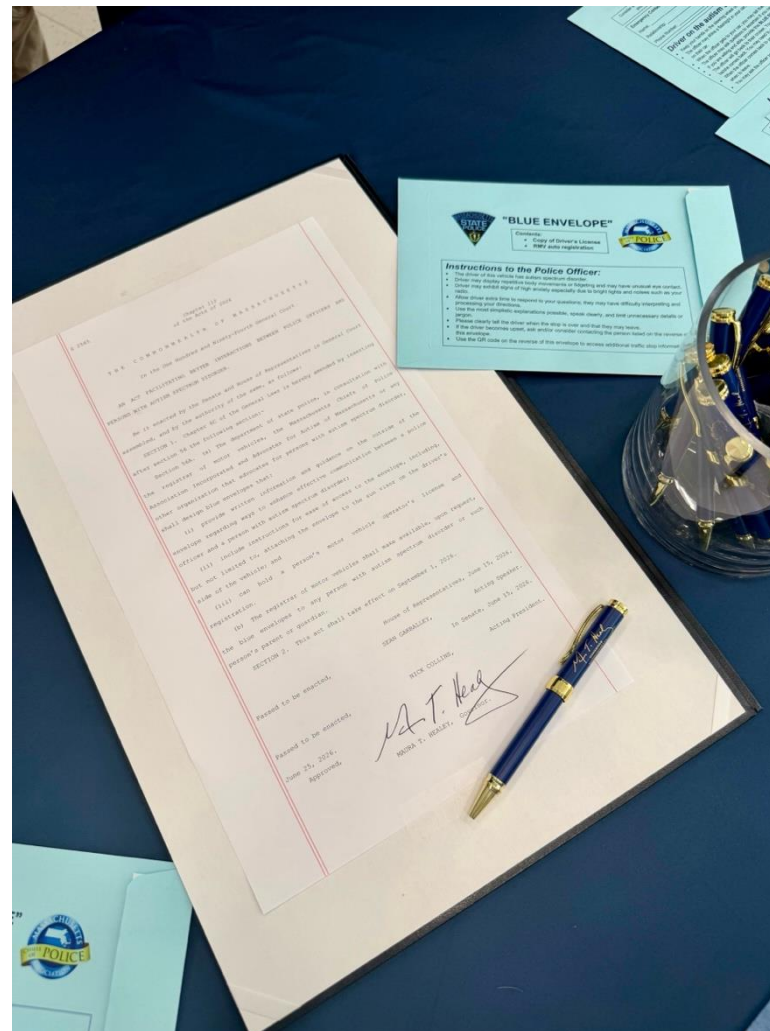
PCA users gather at legislative offices to provide education on the harm further cuts would have



Blue Envelope Bill Signing



Photos from the signing of the Blue Envelope Bill. Governor Healy is photographed holding the bill.





Letter Drop Offs



Destiny Maxam, Policy Coordinator dropped off important letters educating Senators on the harm [S.3171](#) would cause if amendment 5 was not adopted. Pictured here is Destiny with Senator Eldridge



ADA Day 2026 in Boston – July 15

- The MDDC offered resources with information about the MDDC, programs and policies that impact people with DD
- MDDC interviewed people about why the ADA is important to them, and about our proposed 2027-31 State Plan goals and objectives
- The event was well attended by people with disabilities and other community members.
- Event speaker Mayor Wu proclaimed the day to be “Charlie Carr ADA Day.” Disability Advocate Alex Green read Charlie Carr’s compelling speech in his absence.



Pictured are MDDC staff Jennifer, Liz Andre and Ben smiling at the camera behind their info table at ADA Day



ADA Day 2026 in Boston – July 15



[ADA 2026 Celebration: Video Link](#)

MDDC 2027-31 State Plan Update

- On June 10, MDDC members approved State Plan goals and objectives for the next 5 years.
- A 45-day public input period June-August gave community members a chance to comment on the goals and objectives.
- Overall, comments from the public were positive. There were no recommendations for substantive changes.

NEXT STEPS:

By August 15:

- Submit full State Plan to the federal Administration on Disabilities

October 1: Begin new State Plan activities





MDDC 5-Year State Plan Goals

Four State Plan goals for 2027-2031:

- Disability Identity, Community and Leadership
- Health and Well-Being
- Community Living, Participation and Inclusion
- Thriving Across the Life Span





Partner Updates



DD Community Public Comment

Meeting Poll Link:



Feedback
Survey



Public Policy Meeting Dates

The MDDC Public Policy Committee meets at 3PM on the second Tuesday of most months.

** Veterans Day is November 11th, so the meeting is scheduled for the following Tuesday.*

- October 13, 2026
- *November 17, 2026

