

# MDDC Public Policy Committee Meeting

February 10, 2026





# Presenters



**Gyasi Burks-Abbott**

MDDC Policy  
Committee Chairperson



**Jennifer Bertrand**

Deputy Director, MDDC



**Tamara Huntley**

Self-advocacy Liaison, MDDC



**Liz Fancher**

Program Specialist, MDDC

- Welcome/Introductions
- Meeting Poll Link
- MDDC Mission
- State Legislative Update
- Coalition Updates
- Federal Update
- Council & Community Events
- Partner Updates
- Meeting Poll Link
- DD Community Public Comment
- MDDC 2026 Public Policy Committee Meeting Dates

# AGENDA



# 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](#)



# MASSACHUSETTS DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COUNCIL



# MDDC Mission

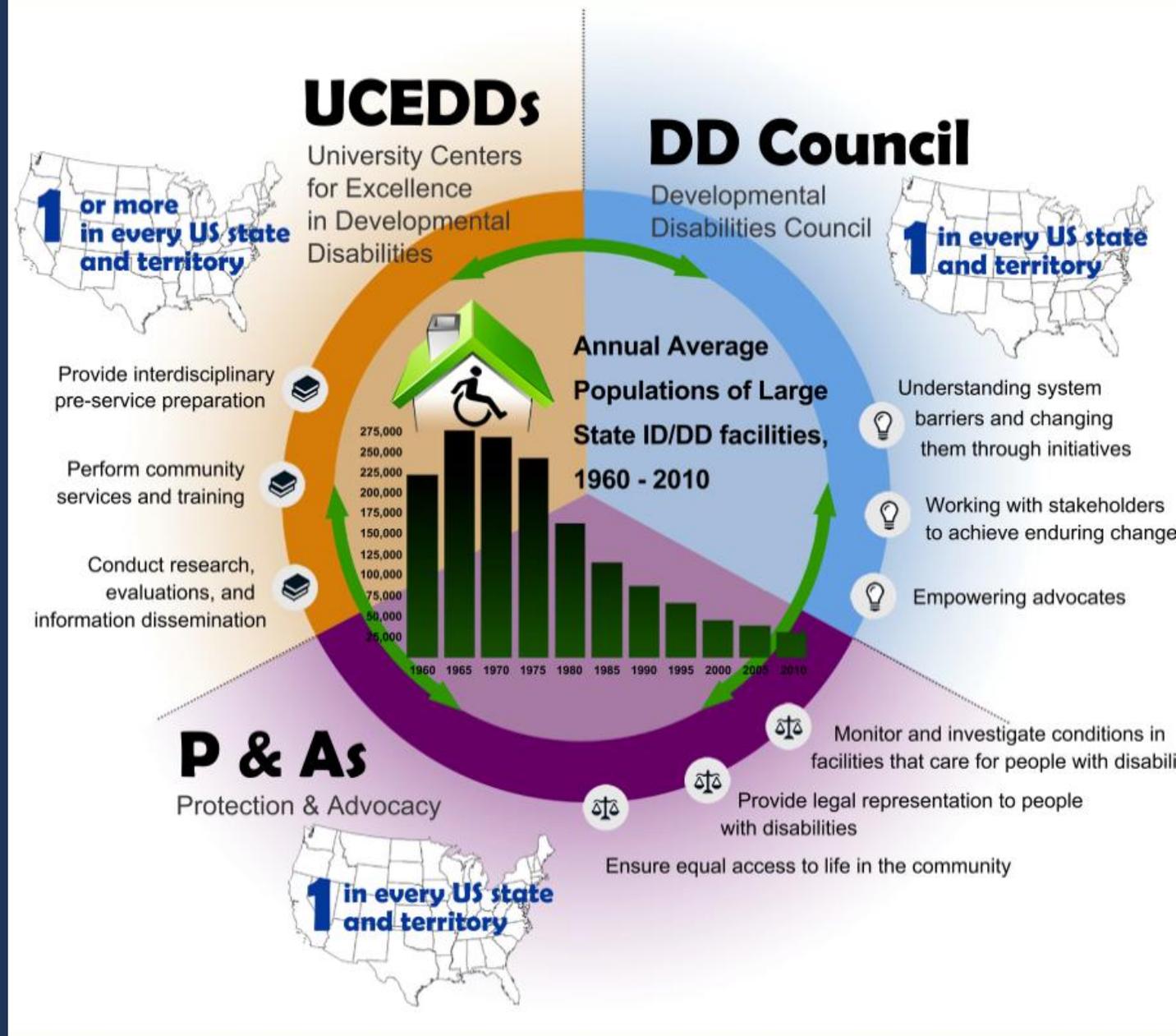
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*Our mission is to provide opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities and families to enhance independence, productivity and inclusion.*



# 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





# State Legislative Update



# State Legislative Update

- The MA Legislature has about 5 months to finalize bills
- The state budget is now a key focus through the end of June
- Formal session closes on July 31, 2026





# MDDC Priority/Endorsed Bill Update

- All MDDC Priority/Endorsed Bills have had a hearing.
- Most bills have received a favorable committee report
- Some bill reporting dates have been extended until March 18th

[MA Legislature 2025-26 Session Legislative Deadlines & Significant Dates](#)

- 2 policies have become law:
  - Education Access
  - Historical Records

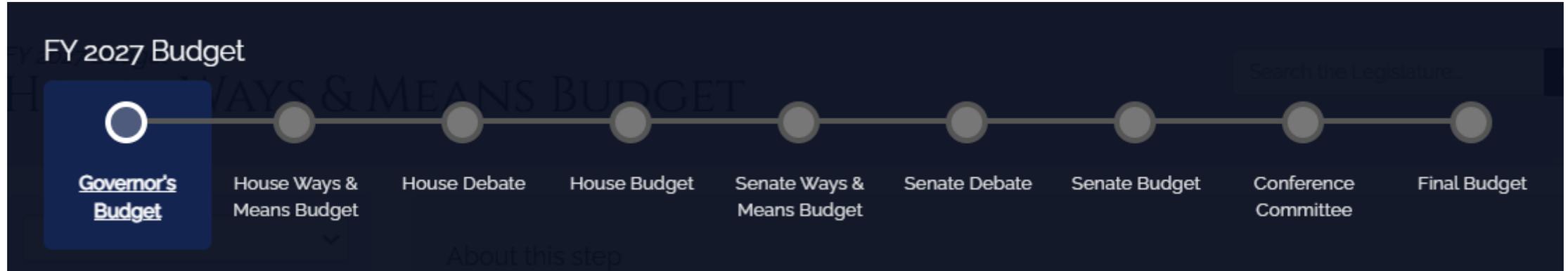
[MDDC Website Homepage](#)

[MDDC Disability Policy Resources](#)

[MDDC Priority & Endorsed Legislation](#)



# State Budget Update



## [Governor's Budget](#)

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

- Each year state policymakers create a new state budget.
- The annual state budget process begins each year in January.
- The Governor files a budget bill in the House.
- This budget bill is known as H.1



# Governor Healey's FY27 State Budget Proposal:

**In the Governor's budget proposal, the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) budget line-items included multiple increases:**

- 37% Autism Omnibus  
*(more people with autism & no ID will be served , many with complex needs)*
- 9% Community Day/Work
- 7% State Operated Homes
- 6% Respite/Family Support
- 2% Community Residential
- Adequate funding for DESE-DDS Residential Placement Prevention Program

[CLICK HERE](#) for more information at The Arc of MA.



# Governor Healey's FY27 State Budget Proposal:

## Chapter 257 Workforce Rates – no cuts

Please note - proposed funding level does not match the 53<sup>rd</sup> percentile of the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) – an additional \$85 million is needed to secure rates at the 53<sup>rd</sup> percentile

## MassHealth Budget

- This is a big part of the state budget
- Gov proposed \$22.7 billion FY27 (a small increase - FY26 \$22.1 billion)
- Spending controls - due to federal Medicaid funding cuts
  - rate freeze (no increases)
  - optional programs (no program expansions that are not required by federal law)

[CLICK HERE](#) for more information at The Arc of MA.



# Governor Healey's FY27 State Budget Proposal:

## Areas of Concern - Pending Cuts:

### 1. Personal Care Attendant Program (PCA Program)

- A workgroup identified \$32 million in cuts to control PCA Program spending

### 2. Adult Day Health (ADH) & Adult Foster Care (AFC)

- Similar workgroups created to cut \$15m in ADH & \$35m in AFC spending

### 3. Adult Dental

- Proposed MassHealth Budget Cap (\$1,000 per member per yr., with exemptions for people DDS-eligible)

### 4. Self-Direction Program – funding levels unclear – many people report no budget increases for years

### 5. REquipment - Durable Medical Equipment/assistive technology Funding Reduction

- \$500,000 (35.7%) reduction (according to DPC analysis)
- This cut may effectively end the statewide reuse program



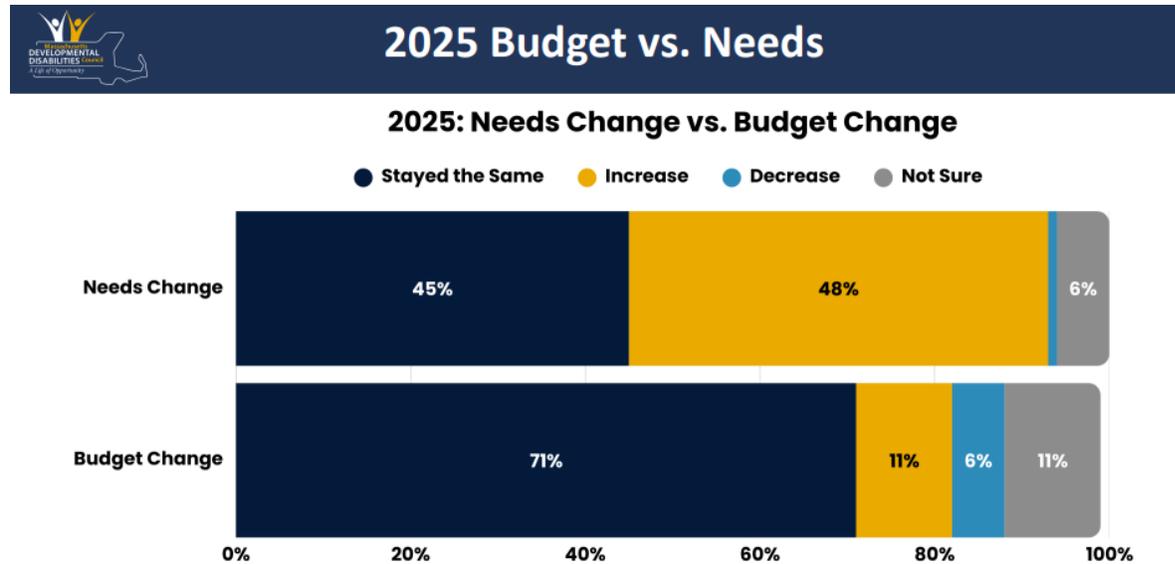
# OBBBA - The Cost of Compliance

- The federal government is limiting who is able access public health insurance (Medicaid Expansion)
- Massachusetts is starting to prepare.
- Once OBBBA is fully implemented (this will take several years), **MA will receive a \$3.5 billion cut in federal health care funding EACH year.**
- It will also cost MA **\$31 million (added costs) to comply with the law.**
- This will create a big hole in the state budget.



# Self-Direction Experiences: Findings from MDDC's Statewide Survey

- In 2025, the MDDC began collecting data on the Self-Direction program.
- MDDC presented the survey findings on Thursday, Jan 29th



In 2025, only 16% of people's who's needs increased, had a budget increase (n=103)



# Self-Direction Experiences: Findings from MDDC's Statewide Survey



**Theme:**  
**Budget not enough to meet service and support needs**

*"We are glad and grateful to be part of PDP. However, we are VERY concerned that this year DDS received a rate increase for day programs, but has not applied these funds to group day activities under PDP, even though the day rates for the program has increased. This poses a real budget challenge for our family."  
- Family member*

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# Self-Direction Experiences: Findings from MDDC's Statewide Survey



**Theme:**  
**Budget not enough to meet service and support needs**

*"We have been involved in self-direction for 8 years. Our budget has not increased in 8 years, despite showing need and having to offer increased hourly rates to hire staff! This is not sustainable. Traditional programs have had increases....why not self-direction."  
- Family Member*



# Self-Direction Experiences: Findings from MDDC's Statewide Survey



**Theme:**  
**Inadequate budget exacerbates staffing challenges.**

*"My daughter's budget is helpful, but it no longer reflects the true costs of providing quality support. Staffing rates have increased significantly, and it is becoming harder to retain skilled workers within the current budget limits. An adjustment that keeps pace with rising wages and service costs would help ensure she can maintain consistent, safe, and meaningful support through Self-Direction ."*  
*- Family Member*

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# Self-Direction Experiences: Findings from MDDC's Statewide Survey



**Theme:**  
**Inadequate budget exacerbates staffing challenges.**

*"As previously noted, budgets should increase annually. Initially we paid \$25/hour for staff. We now pay \$35/hour. This cannot continue. Needs increase as you age, costs increase but the budget does not change. I was not aware that we can "appeal" our budget."  
- Family Member*

*"My sons aid works only 6.5 hours per day. With no health insurance. No retirement plan and no vacation time or sick time. Pay scale has to be increased to maintain good staff." - Family Member*



# MDDC State Budget Advocacy

Educate and inform in the following ways:

- 1. Collect and share stories** from the I/DD community with state leaders and lawmakers each step in the state budget process  
[Share Your Medicaid Story With the Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council Survey](#)
- 2. Distribute policy resources** that highlight the importance of Medicaid-funded LTSS and Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) and workforce rates
- 3. Meet and collaborate** with state leaders, administrators, and legislators to help ensure people with I/DD do not lose eligibility to services



# What can YOU do?

1. Find your legislators  
[Find My Legislator](#)
2. Contact them, attend an in-district event, schedule a meeting, and build a relationship
3. Share your story – explain briefly how a policy or the state budget would impact you/your family
4. Attend the upcoming 48<sup>th</sup> Annual Legislative Reception on March 10<sup>th</sup> (info on slide 53)

The MDDC is here to help!  
Reach out to Jennifer at [Jennifer.Bertrand@mass.gov](mailto:Jennifer.Bertrand@mass.gov)



# Coalition Updates

# PCA Program Update

## PCA program Budget-

Maura Healey released to the public and asked the PCA workgroup to cut the program by 68 million





# New Hire Paperwork Spring 2026

**In addition to the current forms, Consumer-employers will need to submit:**

**PCA/DCW's Federally Required Employment Authorization Documentation that includes:**

- ❖ Photo identification
- ❖ Employment Authorization Documentation (EAD)
- ❖ PCA's employment eligibility will now be verified using e-Verify
- ❖ PCA Provider Contact Information Form

**The following information will be collected:**

- Physical residential address –
- Mailing address –
- Email address –
- Telephone number –
- Sign Consumer Agreement, which has been updated to incorporate regulation changes

Mass Health PCA Program Website: <https://www.mass.gov/masshealth-personal-care-attendant-program>

# Complex Care Update

## People who are eligible need:

- Proper Documentation-Digital rectal stimulation on their prior authorization form from their doctor
- Currently 931 people have prior authorization
- Mass Health projected a higher number- 3,500 making the actual number resulting in cost savings.



# Immigration Issues

- PCA's that don't have the proper US work documentation will be automatically terminated from their PCA roles.
- Federal Judge Issued ruling blocked Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for approximately 350,000 Haitian Immigrants.





# REV-UP!

REV-Up! MA Is a statewide coalition of organizations & individuals:

- Educate people with disabilities about voting rights
- Advocate for accessible voting processes
- Help people with disabilities register to vote
- Encourage civic engagement of people with disabilities





# REV-UP!

Next meeting is on February 26 @ 1:30pm.

Registration link:

<https://zoom.us/meeting/register/Q6GUbspIShO-fOk5m-XxbQ#/registration>





# REV-UP!

The national REV-Up! coalition is offering “movement grants” for up to \$10,000 to small nonprofit organizations.

- Grassroots organizations working to engage voters with disabilities & increase election accessibility are encouraged to apply. Priority is to reach underserved communities
- Deadline to apply is end of February
- Webinar about the grants is on February 11

[2026 REV UP Movement Grants - AAPD](#)



# The Massachusetts Alliance for 21st Century Disability Policy (MA21)

- MA21 was formed in 2007 to protect the right of people with disabilities to self-direct, and helped pass the Real Lives Law in 2014.
- Updated fact sheet - "The Real Lives Law Legal Status."
  - Summarizes implementation status and provisions of the 2014 Real Lives Law
  - Highlights ongoing challenges reported by individuals and families in fully accessing these self-direction rights
  - Outlines next steps to strengthen the self-direction program



# Guardianship Alternatives Innovation Network (GAIN)

- Led by MDDC and has a focus on guardianship alternatives
- March Coalition meeting date TBD

**Center for Public Representation (CPR) & Parent/Professional Advocacy League (PPAL) host webinar 6-8PM, Thursday, February 12<sup>th</sup>:**

## **Guardianship is Not The Only Option: Supporting Decisions in Adulthood**

Parents of youth with disabilities are often incorrectly told that the only way to remain involved in their child's adult life is to go to court and become a legal guardian. But that is not true. There are other options —including Supported Decision-Making— that may work better for a person with a disability and their family.

[Registration](#)



# Federal Update



# Federal Appropriations

A continuing resolution (CR) is a temporary funding measure used by the U.S. government to avoid a government shutdown when regular appropriations bills are not enacted by the start of the fiscal year.

- Last week President Trump signed a budget package.
- This package of bills reopened most of the government, which was briefly shut down.
- Congress still needs to decide on The Department of Homeland Security's longer-term funding.

[Trump Wanted To Cut Disability Programs. Congress Just Said No - Disability Scoop](#)

# Federal Appropriations Continued



- Funded departments:
  - Defense
  - Treasury
  - State
  - Health and Human Services
  - Labor
  - Housing and Urban Development
  - Transportation
  - Education

through Sept. 30, 2026

[Trump Wanted To Cut Disability Programs. Congress Just Said No - Disability Scoop](#)



# Federal Appropriations Continued



- The spending plan has language to:
  - keep special education programs in the Dept of Education
  - not allow IDEA block grants - IDEA programs
- Level-fund DD Councils
- Maintain UCEDDs, P&As protection and advocacy agencies
- Maintain The Administration for Community Living (ACL)
- NACDD is now working on the next appropriation for the next federal fiscal year 2027.

[Trump Wanted To Cut Disability Programs. Congress Just Said No - Disability Scoop](#)



# What's changing with Medicaid?

# Key Medicaid Changes



**“Medicaid isn't going away, but it will be harder for some to stay enrolled.”**

- More Frequent Coverage Checks (2026)
- Financing Changes (provider tax limits)
- More Paperwork
- Stricter Eligibility Requirements
- Work Requirements (2027)  
(some people may lose coverage even if they still qualify)
- Medicaid Funding & Administration Changes  
(may impact hospitals, doctors, and the availability of other health providers – especially in rural and low-income communities)

[Guide to Medicaid Eligibility Changes Coming in 2026 and Beyond | U.S. News](#)



# Medicaid Work Requirements Update

- Congress approved H.R.1 last summer that includes nearly \$1 trillion in Medicaid cuts
- “Community engagement” requirements say that many people must prove that they are working, volunteering or going to school to qualify for coverage
- States are working to create systems to determine whether people meet the new rules
- The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) issued initial guidance in December 2025.

[Click Here](#) to read Disability Scoop article “Medicaid Changes Could Limit Access For People with Disabilities Advocates Warn”



# Work Requirements Continued

- CMS guidance exempts the following from the new rules:
  - the “medically frail”
  - people “special medical needs”  
(including those with physical, intellectual or developmental disabilities)
  - Parents, guardians, caretaker relatives and family caregivers of those with disabilities are also exempt
- There are concerns that some people with disabilities and chronic health conditions that limit their ability to find and keep work will NOT be exempt and could lose coverage

[Click Here](#) to read Disability Scoop article “Medicaid Changes Could Limit Access For People with Disabilities Advocates Warn”



# Work Requirements Continued

- In a Consortium for Constituents with Disabilities letter from to CMS last fall, it was noted that when similar work requirements have been implemented in the past for Medicaid and other government programs *“exemption policies and processes have failed to capture everyone who should qualify and resulted in people with disabilities, older adults who have retired, and caregivers falling through the cracks and becoming uninsured.”*
- CMS is expected to release further guidance and regulations this year.

[Click Here](#) to read Disability Scoop article “Medicaid Changes Could Limit Access For People with Disabilities Advocates Warn”



# Work Requirements Continued

## Advocacy Groups Recommendations to States:

1. Use existing data to verify eligibility rather than mandating new paperwork
2. Provide assistance with applications and renewals as a reasonable modification/accommodation
3. Use broad definitions of “medically frail” and “special medical needs.”
4. Allow individuals to self-attest for exemptions and ensure that their notices, online portals and other communications are accessible.

[Click Here](#) to read Disability Scoop article “Medicaid Changes Could Limit Access For People with Disabilities Advocates Warn”



# Medicaid Work Requirements Webinar

**JUSTICE IN AGING**  
FIGHTING SENIOR POVERTY THROUGH LAW

## Implementing New Medicaid Work Requirements: Strategies to Minimize Harm in Your State (February 5, 2026)

To learn more you can [access the recording, slides, and transcript](#), and [access the toolkit](#).



# Olmstead v. L.C.

**Olmstead's Effects on Housing Affordability, Supportive Housing, and Home and Community-Based Services: A Three-State Study**

**This report and its associated case studies were conducted by the Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF), in partnership with the Community Living Policy Center.**

**Read the report at The Brandeis Community Living Policy Center**



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Tom Olin Collection

# About Olmstead v. L.C.

- The case was about two women Lois Curtis and Elaine Wilson.
- They were confined in a state institution but ready to live and receive services in the community.
- After years of being isolated, they sued the state.
- The women argued that their rights were violated under the ADA.

[\*\*CLICK HERE\*\*](#) to learn more about the history of the Olmstead Decision.



# Olmstead Report: A Three State Study

- The Supreme Court's Olmstead decision says that.. people with disabilities have a right to live in the community.
- This “integration mandate” required states to take action to get people with disabilities out of institutions and into the community.
- This report looks at how the Olmstead Decision brought about positive change in three states: Georgia, North Carolina, and Virginia.

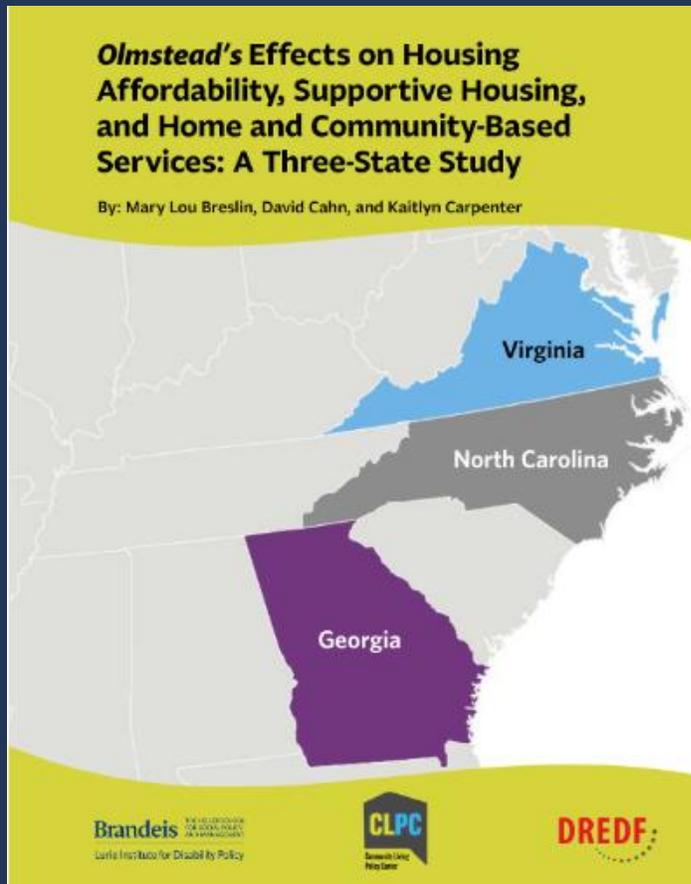


# Olmstead Report: A Three State Study

This report describes what each state did to improve access to community living for people with disabilities, including improving housing affordability, supportive housing, and Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS).

**Olmstead is an important tool, and these three states illustrate examples of affordable housing creation at the state and local level.**

# The Integration Mandate



- led to a less people in institutions or at risk of living in institutions
- Inspired more state funding for supportive housing services and Medicaid waiver-funded Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS)
- Even with this progress, there are still barriers to community living (*i.e., lack of housing, workforce shortages, reduced federal funding and limited state funding*)



# Texas v. Kennedy

Read more at:

[DREDF](#)

[Disability Scoop](#)



# States Sue Over Right Of People With Disabilities To Live In The Community

- 9 states are challenging the right of people with disabilities to live and receive services in the community as opposed to institutions. (this is an ongoing lawsuit)
- **These states say that the [2024 update](#) to U.S. Department of Health and Human Services regulations related to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act is unconstitutional.**



# States Sue Over Right Of People With Disabilities To Live In The Community

- These 9 states have an issue with the “integration mandate.”
- This rule says that state and local governments and other entities receiving HHS funding must serve people with disabilities in the most integrated setting appropriate. The rule also says states can be in violation of Section 504 if people with disabilities are unnecessary institutionalized.
- Not obeying the rule could mean states lose some federal funds



# Council & Community Events



**48th Annual  
Legislative Reception  
Protecting Our Lives:  
Now More than Ever**

**2026  
Disability  
Legislative  
Champions**



**Senator of the Year:**  
Sen. Joan Lovely  
2<sup>nd</sup> Essex



**Representative of the Year:**  
Rep. Jay Livingstone  
8<sup>th</sup> Suffolk

**You're Invited to join us  
to celebrate  
Developmental  
Disabilities Awareness  
Month!**

**Registration Now OPEN!**

[48th Annual Legislative Reception | Mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov)





# Massachusetts Advocates Standing Strong (MASS)

## MASS Statewide Drop-in

This is a valuable way to connect with advocates on Zoom and share on topics such as communication, relationship building, and independence.

**MASS always welcome new members!**

[info@wearemass.org](mailto:info@wearemass.org)

phone, (857) 360-0134.

2nd Thursday of every month from 5:30-7PM

or the 4th Wednesday of every month from 4:30-6PM

[Statewide Self Advocate Drop-In Tickets, Multiple Dates | Eventbrite](#)



# Boston Center for Independent Living (BCIL) Housing Workshops

BCIL hosts Housing Workshops for people with disabilities the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of every month from 10am-12pm.

The workshops take place via Zoom and in BCIL's Temple Place office.

What you will learn about:

Affordable housing options in the Boston area

How to apply for subsidized housing

Where to look for housing

[Information & Registration](#)



# Disability Policy Consortium (DPC)- Annual Legislative Briefing

Community members, bill sponsors, and legislators are invited!

**Wednesday, February 25th, 1-4PM**

**Massachusetts State House, Room 428 & Online**

This is a valuable opportunity to learn more about issues important to our community. Attendees will hear from people sharing what DPC has meant to them, along with updates on DPC's priority bills, like wheelchair repair reform, affordable housing, and hearing aid coverage, and how you can advocate.

[Information & Registration](#)



# 5-year State Plan Update

- The MDDC is developing a new 5-year State Plan.
- The State Plan is a “road map” to plan the MDDC’s future work & priorities.
- Public input is important for us to identify priorities, barriers and service gaps.
- The next round of public input will be in March and April. We want to hear from YOU!





# Partner Updates

**Meeting Poll Link:**



**[CLICK HERE](#)**



# DD Community Public Comments



# 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.*



- April 14, 2026
- May 12, 2026
- June 9, 2026
- August 11, 2026
- October 13, 2026
- \*November 17, 2026