

THE AUDITOR'S REPORT



News & Updates

from the Office of the State Auditor Suzanne M. Bump

Making government work better



Suzanne M. Bump
State Auditor

Dear Friend,

Often, I am asked whether my office ever produces audits that do not find deficiencies in public programs or administrative operations. It is a logical question, since usually the audits that receive the most attention are those in which we find the most problems. So, when I reply that indeed we often produce audits with no findings, people are invariably surprised. "Well, if that is so, why don't we hear about them," they want to know. The answer, I tell them, is simple. Good news does not sell newspapers, so those audits don't get attention.

An exception to that rule was seen last month, with the issuance of [an audit reviewing the effectiveness of a program to aid retention in county District Attorney's offices](#) through boosting salaries for incumbent prosecutors. For several years, the Legislature has earmarked funds so that DA's could hang onto experienced prosecutors. Too often, the DA's were finding themselves training new JD's to become capable defenders of justice only to see them leave after just a few years for more lucrative practices. Our audit tracked the results of those investments in retention and found very positive trends. Lo and behold, the media picked up this story, and the public learned of a public expenditure that worked.

Part of making government work better is highlighting those areas where it is falling short, however just as important is noting those areas where it succeeds. These successes provide policymakers with important insight into which strategies are sound investments.

Thank you,

Suzanne M. Bump
Auditor of the Commonwealth



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According to the Greater Boston Food bank, 1 in 10 eastern Massachusetts residents is at risk of hunger. As part of the OSA Cares program, OSA staff based in Boston recently volunteered at the food bank and helped sort 8,640 pounds of food which provides meals for 7,200 families and individuals.

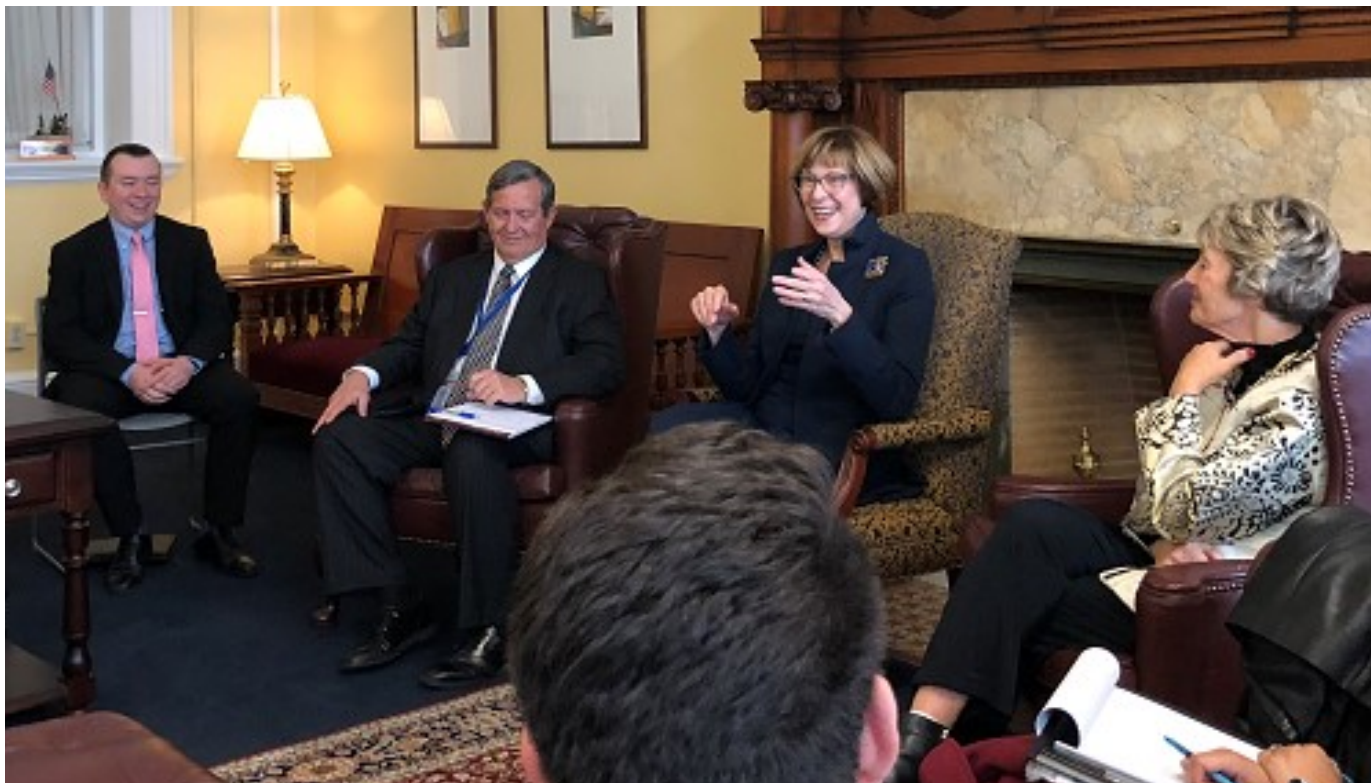
OSA Focus: Giving Back

In the Office of the State Auditor (OSA), we not only care about making government work better for the residents of the Commonwealth, we're also passionate about giving back to those who are less fortunate. This is the core philosophy behind our OSA Cares initiative, which encourages staff of the office to give back to non-profits in the state. Last month, our office took part in two service activities that offered assistance to our fellow Bay Staters.

In honor of [One Boston Day](#), staff from the OSA held a drive to collect gently worn sneakers to be donated to the St. Francis House, a non-profit that provides shelter and assistance to homeless Bay State residents. In total, the office collected [over 30 pairs of shoes](#), which will be given to clients at the St. Francis House.

Later in April, a group of OSA staff members also donated their time to the Greater Boston Food Bank (GBFB). The GBFB provides food to organizations, such as food pantries, soup kitchens, and senior centers in Eastern Massachusetts, that distribute it to people struggling with food insecurity in their neighborhoods. According to the organization, 1 in 10 eastern Massachusetts residents is at risk of hunger. The OSA staff helped to sort 8,640 pounds of food, which will provide meals for 7,200 people.

By volunteering our time, talent, and resources through the OSA Cares initiative, we believe we can make a meaningful difference in the lives of some of our state's most vulnerable residents.



Auditor Bump recently welcomed students from Suffolk University to the State House and shared some of the lessons she's learned during her career in public service.

OSA's Work Makes Headlines

MassHealth overpaid for drug tests, audit finds

An audit of the state's Medicaid program, MassHealth, found the agency overpaid for drug screenings and tests because services were "unbundled," which means they were billed individually rather than collectively, the *Boston Globe* reports. A 2013 audit conducted by the Office of the State Auditor found similar deficiencies.

A tale of two audits

In an editorial, the *Cape Cod Times* weighs in on the value of audits as tools to improve government, citing a 2017 audit of Barnstable County. The editorial notes that audits serve as tools to help agencies address lingering problems they face.

Audit: Worcester district attorney's office had lowest assistant district attorney turnover rate

Financial investments made to support retention efforts for experienced prosecutors at district attorney's offices has successfully reduced turnover statewide, but long-term change might be limited if a comprehensive plan isn't adopted, the *Worcester Telegram & Gazette* reports.

Accountability in Action: Drug Screening

As the Commonwealth has wrestled with the opioid crisis in recent years, drug screens and tests have become increasingly important tools for health care providers seeking to treat those struggling with addiction. A recent audit from the Office of the State Auditor (OSA) found deficiencies at MassHealth, the state's Medicaid program, are resulting in millions of dollars in improper or unnecessary spending for these services.

[The audit, which was released last month](#), found that MassHealth overpaid for improper drug screens and tests by as much as \$4.38 million. The majority of these improper claims were the result of “unbundling,” a practice in which providers bill MassHealth individually for services that should be billed collectively and at a lower rate. A 2013 audit found similar problems; this year's audit notes MassHealth's improvements made as a result of that audit have been inadequate in addressing this problem.



An audit released last month found MassHealth, the state's Medicaid program, overpaid for improper drug screens and tests by as much as \$4.38 million.

MassHealth noted that its computer system did identify suspected “unbundled” claims and would pay them, but flag them for further investigation. However, the agency pointed to a lack of staff resources, which often left these claims uninvestigated.

MassHealth is a large, important, and complex program. It is imperative as new health issues arise—such as the opioid epidemic—that the program has processes in place to ensure that resources are used to provide help to those who need it. This audit provides important recommended steps to help MassHealth in this effort.



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