



The Arc of Massachusetts FY26 Budget Ask: House of Representatives

The Arc of Massachusetts is the state's leading advocacy organization for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and their families – about 250,000 Massachusetts residents. We are grateful for Governor Healey's FY26 budget proposal and look forward to working with our partners in the legislature through the coming budget process. Especially in this moment of great uncertainty from the federal government, we need the strong support of our state lawmakers.

As the budget moves to the House Ways & Means Committee, our top budget priority is the human services workforce crisis. We are also seeking increases in other areas, focusing on access to services, particularly for those with complex behavioral and medical needs and for marginalized communities.

Investing in the Human Services Workforce Through Chapter 257 (Line Item 1599-6903)

- **The Issue:** The human service sector is in crisis. A long-term workforce shortage has led to lengthy waitlists for services. This has significant impacts on individuals and caregivers alike. Adults with IDD and ASD are suffering without access to services, and caregivers are often unable to work until their loved ones can access meaningful programming.
- **Context:** We are grateful for historic investments in Chapter 257 made in the FY25 budget, which helped to reduce vacancy rates for direct support professionals (DSPs) from 24% to 19%, according to the Association for Developmental Disabilities Providers (ADDP). However, there are still over 2,000 people with autism, profound autism, or IDD on waitlists for services as of October 2024. The funding level in the Governor's H1 budget proposal will not alleviate this crisis. It maintains salaries at the 53rd percentile of the Bureau of Labor Statistics (\$20.79 per hour for the median, entry level DSP).
 - Our long-term goal is to align salaries for human service staff with the 75th percentile of the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Our FY26 budget ask is an incremental step toward that goal.
- **The Ask:** Recognizing current fiscal pressures, we request that the funding for Chapter 257 rates align with **the 63rd percentile this year. This \$100 million investment** would raise the median, entry level DSP salary to \$22.35 per hour. The investment to the 63rd percentile will go a long way towards improving recruitment, training and retention, and ensuring a high-quality community-based service system.

Supporting Young Adults through Turning 22 (DDS Line Item 5920-5000)

- **The Issue:** Individuals with IDD and ASD often stay in the school system until they turn 22, at which time they transition to adult services. At this transition, individuals often face a “cliff” where they lose access to critical services, treatments, and other meaningful opportunities. This is a critical time in an individual’s life where investment and intensive planning is needed.
- **Context:** The Governor’s H1 budget proposal reduced the Turning 22 line item by 11%. However, we know that incoming Turning 22 classes are larger and have more complex needs. The Arc is especially concerned about those with profound autism or complex medical needs, who are unable to find services, which are often 24/7 and require one-to-one staffing.
- **The Ask:** Trying to balance these needs with this year’s challenging fiscal environment, we understand a significant increase in this line item may not be feasible this year. As such, we are **seeking a partial (50%) restoration at \$6.7 million**. We believe that this investment will allow around 180 people to receive meaningful supports and services.

Investing in the Community: Community Day and Work Programs (DDS Line Item 5920-2025)

- **The Issue:** This line item funds community-based adult services. These programs provide meaningful support, skill-building activities, and connections to adults with IDD and ASD across the Commonwealth. As mentioned previously, the workforce crisis has limited access to these programs. According to the same ADDP survey referenced above, as of October 2024 there were 2,413 people waiting for services. 731 of those have been waiting since before the pandemic - a crisis that exacerbated this existing challenge.
- **Context:** The Governor’s H1 budget essentially level-funds this line item, despite these staggering waitlist numbers.
- **The Ask:** Though our goal is to get all who are waiting back into services, we think it is important to prioritize those who have been waiting since the pandemic. **Increasing this line item by \$3.5 million** would make a significant impact on this group’s ability to get back into programming.

For More Information, Please Contact

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