



The Arc of Massachusetts FY27 Budget: House Amendment Priorities

The Arc of Massachusetts is the state's leading advocacy organization for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), including autism, and their families. We represent and advocate for over 250,000 Massachusetts residents.

We appreciate the House Ways & Means Committee budget proposal and look forward to working with the legislature throughout the budget process. **Especially at this time of great federal uncertainty and cuts, we need the steadfast support of our state leaders.** As the House debates the FY27 budget, The Arc is advocating for the following amendments to support and strengthen our community.

Chapter 257 Rate Sustainability (#736, filed by Rep. Finn)

We are aligned with other organizations, including ADDP and The Collaborative, to protect wages for direct support professionals who work with individuals with disabilities. The House Ways & Means proposal commits to the same \$175 million funding level for Chapter 257 as the Governor's proposal, even though a full \$260 million is needed to fund rates at the 53rd percentile of the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Our understanding is that there was an overestimate of inflation in FY26, and that balance will be moved over to reach the \$260 million needed for FY27. We will continue to monitor this closely.

However, the Ways & Means proposal does include concerning language seeking a study that references the 50th percentile—an inadequate figure that would move us backwards. **This amendment would remove this language and commit to maintaining rates at the 53rd percentile.**

DESE-DDS Residential Prevention Program (#426, filed by Rep. Gordon)

This is a crucial program that allows for substantial supports in the home so that young adults with complex needs can successfully remain in their community. For those who are on the cusp of requiring a residential placement, this program can allow them to stay at home, providing benefits to individuals and families. Crucially, this program also provides cost-savings to the Commonwealth, as it is significantly less expensive than residential placements. We appreciate the \$10.5 million included in the House Ways & Means proposal and are seeking an **additional \$1.2 million to serve more families.**

Nicky's Law Expansion (#714, filed by Rep. Garballey and Rep. Cataldo)

Modeled after H. 243, which is currently before the House Ways & Means Committee after being favorably reported by the Committee on Children, Families, and Persons with Disabilities and the Healthcare Financing Committee, this language expands the successful Nicky's/Dana's Law abuse registry to those receiving services in MassHealth Day Habilitation programs. These providers would be required to use the registry before making hiring decisions, **ensuring that participants are safe from harm.**

The Arc's Operation House Call (#639, filed by Rep. Lawn)

Operation House Call (OHC) is a program run by The Arc of Massachusetts that teaches students in medical, nursing, and other health professional schools the essential skills and mindsets to improve access and reduce disparities in health care of persons with autism and IDD. This unique program teaches students from the perspective of the individual with the disability and their family members. The legislature passed the OHC bill into law in 2023 and has consistently included an earmark for OHC. Just this past year, OHC has developed a process to certify qualifying schools with the Department of Public Health (DPH). The program currently reaches over 1,200 students per year and is taught in all medical schools in MA and 2 graduate schools of nursing. There are also successful pilots underway with Regis College School of Nursing and Harvard School of Dental Medicine. **This \$150,000 amendment would enable OHC to continue to grow its reach and impact.**

Blue Envelope (#541, filed by Rep. Domb and Rep. Garballey)

Modeled after H.3655, which was reported favorably by the Committee on Transportation and is currently before the House Ways and Means Committee, this language aims to facilitate communication between law enforcement and individuals with autism. It would allow drivers or passengers who are diagnosed with autism to voluntarily request a blue envelope to support the individual and law enforcement during a traffic stop. The State Police have already distributed over 1,200 envelopes, but this language must finally become law to **ensure that the program is codified and consistently applied across the Commonwealth.**

Workforce Training Funds for Complex Behaviors (#429, filed by Rep. Barber)

Building off a successful series of pilot initiatives by The Arc and Advocates for Autism of Massachusetts (AFAM), this **\$100,000 earmark would provide additional workforce training funds** for those serving adults with autism and complex behavioral needs. By giving this workforce more tools and training, they will be better supported to care for individuals with complex behaviors.

AFC Working Group (#815, filed by Rep. Kushmerek)

The Governor's budget proposal called for a working group, including advocates, to determine cost-savings in the Adult Family/Foster Care (AFC) program. AFC empowers family members or caregivers to support their loved ones in the home, providing them a tax-exempt stipend and care management support. This amendment **ensures that no cuts will be made until that working group has completed its recommendations**, ensuring that cost containment is balanced with the importance of this program to families.

For questions or more information, please contact Nora Bent, Director of Government Affairs at nbent@arcmass.org or 617-319-2461