



The Arc of Massachusetts FY27 Budget: Senate 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 Senate Ways & Means Committee budget proposal and look forward to working with our partners in the legislature throughout the budget process. **We are particularly grateful to the Senate Ways & Means Committee for including crucial language based on The Arc's Turning 22 bill, to create a commission to strengthen the Turning 22 transition process for all.**

Especially at this time of great federal uncertainty and cuts, we need the steadfast support of our state leaders. As the Senate debates the FY27 budget, The Arc is advocating for the following amendments, which would support and strengthen our community.

DESE-DDS Residential Prevention Program (#710, filed by Sen. Kennedy)

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 Senate Ways & Means proposal and are seeking an additional \$1.2 million to serve more families.**

Operation House Call (#816, filed by Sen. Lewis)

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.**

Workforce Training Funds for Complex Behaviors (#442, filed by Sen. Keenan)

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 tangible training, they will be better supported to care for individuals with complex, challenging behaviors.

AFC Working Group (#499, filed by Sen. Jehlen)

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.**

Tommy's Bill (#504, filed by Sen. O'Connor)

Based off our **Tommy's Law priority bill**, this language requires that when an individual is discharged from a medical facility, the discharge plan is appropriately reviewed with residential facility nursing staff. This is critical to ensure that staff are adequately trained on life-saving medical equipment.

Alternative and Augmentative Communication Professional Development (#646, filed by Sen. O'Connor)

Based off one of our endorsed bills, **this language would require teachers to be trained on the appropriate use of augmentative and alternative communication devices (AAC) and other assistive technologies**. This is critical for the education of students who are non-speaking or have communication support needs.

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