Direct Support Workforce Campaign Update

Presented by: Ellen Taverna & Leo Sarkissian
Monday, May 20, 2019
The mission of The Arc of Massachusetts is to enhance the lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, including autism, and their families. We fulfill this through advocacy for community supports and services that foster social inclusion, self-determination, and equity across all aspects of society.
Today’s Agenda

Part 1 - Overview of Massachusetts Workforce Shortage Crisis

Part 2 - Proposed Fixes by Legislature and Administration

Part 3 - Advocacy: How You Can Make a Difference
OVERVIEW OF MASSACHUSETTS WORKFORCE SHORTAGE CRISIS

Part 1
Crisis in the Workforce

- 72% of Mass. human service providers report that it has become increasingly more challenging to fill job openings over the past three years.

- Families rely on the direct support workforce for daily routine, respite, employment support and avoid caregiver fatigue.

The 2017 FINDS Survey of Caregivers reported that 48% were either very or extremely stressed by having to provide care for an individual with I/DD.

6 in 10 participants report experiencing three or more of the following work impacts from caregiving:

- 91% going into work late, leaving early, or taking time off during the day to provide care.
- 55% cutting back their hours.
- 33% turning down a promotion.
- 30% turning down career opportunities in other states due to the lack of Medicaid portability across state lines.
- 24% receiving warnings about work attendance or performance.
- 43% taking a leave of absence.
- 32% giving up work entirely.
Crisis for Families & Agencies

• Individual w/disabilities & Family Caregivers face challenges in hiring staff for in-home services whether for care attendants, respite or nursing.
  – 92% of Caregivers indicated difficulty with finding Direct Support Professionals (DSP) in recent FINDS Survey.

• The annual national turnover rate for the DSP workforce is an estimated 46% with a majority leaving within 1 year of employment.

• Massachusetts ranked 35th in the country on how well its Medicaid program serves people with I/DD.
The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

At a Glance

The Massachusetts unemployment rate continues to remain low at 3.3 percent.

Unable to recruit college graduates burdened with high college loans.

Our state is the 3rd highest costly to live in. To afford a one-bedroom apartment, a worker at min wage ($11/hour) must work 84 hours a week.
Addressing the *Entire* Workforce

The Workforce is hired by:

- Individuals with disabilities
- Caregiver families or neighbors
- Providers
- Public Sector authorities

DDS & MassHealth line items or programs affected include, e.g.:

- Family Support
- Employment/Day
- Residential
- DESE-DDS
- Autism Child Waiver and Autism Omnibus
- Day Habilitation
- Adult Family/Foster Care
- Continuous Nursing
- Personal Care
ROLES OF DSP STAFF:

- Help perform &/or teach activities of daily living such as mobility, dressing, toileting, administering medications, shopping or banking
- Provide employment assistance
- Build bridges to community activities, clubs and new relationships
- Ensure safety

ARCMASS.ORG/WORKFORCE
Job Market Values and Realities

- Mean wages of DSPs are below those of janitors, clerks and others (Bureau of Labor statistics):
  - Nannies - $17.66
  - Janitor/Custodian - $16.97
  - File Clerk - $17.53

- We want to attract committed, long-term DSPs who value their work with people with disabilities and families.
Part 2

PROPOSED FIXES BY LEGISLATURE & ADMINISTRATION
The Arc’s WORKFORCE PROPOSAL
FOUR STRATEGIES

1. Workforce Investment
2. Innovation and System Design
3. Clinical Teams & Trained Staff
4. Building Human capital
Significant investment is needed over the next few years to achieve the entry & mean salary levels and improved benefits to recruit and retain a stronger, more qualified workforce and reduce high turnover costs.

Strategy 1: Workforce Investment
An act relative to meeting the human services workforce demand, HD 1130

- 70 Co-sponsors (5/20 8 am)
- Min. $17/hour wage for entry level direct support/care staff with a goal of $24/hour by 2025
An act relative to meeting the human services workforce demand, HD 1130 - cont’d

- Determination of wage rates of all human services workers, excluding executives, review every two years
- Address loopholes that dilute personnel salaries
- EOHHS shall implement a long-term plan within 8-months

Enforcement Mechanisms

Next Steps – Committee?, Hearing?
Other Relevant Bills on Arc’s Legislative Platform

- **S. 1077/H. 138, An Act relative fair pay for comparable work (Parity Bill)**
  - Representative Kay Khan, Senator Cindy Friedman
  - Referred to Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities - Hearing on 5/28, 10 am, Rm B-1
  - Eliminates the pay disparity between state workers & nonprofit human services workers doing similar jobs

- **S. 56/H. 163, An Act relative to loan repayment program for human service workers**
  - Representatives Jeff Roy and Smitty Pignatelli and Senator Eric Lesser
  - Referred to Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities - Hearing on 5/28, 10 am, Rm B-1
  - Creates student loan repayment plan for low-paid human services workers
Response by Administration

The Executive Office of Health & Human Services must adopt a process to develop a long-term action plan to address the crisis.
Part 3

ADVOCACY – HOW YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE
Legislative Leadership

President of the Senate - Karen Spilka
- Track record in House and Senate of supporting The Arc’s policy priorities
- Earliest efforts - DDS eligibility

Speaker of the House - Robert DeLeo
- In his first term, fought for max. feasible benefit (Spec. Ed.)
- Continued support of The Arc throughout various roles

Both leaders have been The Arc “legislators of the year” two times.
Key Policy Makers

Senator Michael Rodrigues is the new Chair, Senate Committee on Ways and Means. He is lead senate sponsor on a higher I/DD education bill.

Representative Aaron Michlewitz, new Chair, House Committee on Ways and Means. He is a co-sponsor of a bill that provides new employment opportunities.
Tips for Calling Your Legislator

• Find your legislator - https://malegislature.gov/StateHouse/Contact

• Statehouse # - (617) 722-2000

• Identify yourself - where you’re calling from, and in what capacity

• State purpose of call - improve the quality of support & services for yourself or a loved one

• State what you want - co-sponsor HD 1130 - increase in wages for direct support workers
What to say to Legislator?

• Tell them why you want a **qualified/reliable DSP workforce**.

• Ask about his/her stand or opinion on HD 1130??

• Thank them for their time and express your appreciation if they are supporting your issue!

• Follow up & Report back to The Arc!
Tips for Writing/Emailing Legislator

• Use The Arc action alert.

• Who you are: Name, address, phone number, email.

• You’re writing about recruiting & retaining a qualified DSP workforce. Add personal story/picture.

• Ask for support (co-sponsor) of HD 1130.

• Offer to provide more info - attach The Arc factsheet.

• Thank them.
Tips on Meeting With Your Legislator

• Do your research
• Plan/Schedule meeting
• Use The Arc resources
• Share Your Story
• Make request - HD 1130
• Thank them for meeting
• Follow-up
• Share with The Arc
Using Media

- Write a Letter to the Editor (comment on article)
- Share your personal story
- Share your stories, calls and state house visits on social media and with The Arc.

Letters to the Editor

Dear Soho Weekly News:

This is a fan letter. I have been reading your paper for two or three months now, and you get better and better. You have more on the ball than the Voice and are not so consumed with self-importance.

I am especially pleased with Robb Baker’s series on Gay Theatre. Everyone believes we (that is, gays) have always, to varying degrees, been a force in the arts. But here, as in the rest of society, we stayed in the closet. Now we are coming out, which is good for us and good for society. With the opportunity to portray ourselves as we see ourselves, rather than how heterosexuals choose to portray us, we can begin to break down some of the vulgar stereotypes and emerge as human beings.

Thank you.
Sincerely,
Hugh H. Holt

Dear Soho Weekly News:

Sid Zion is beginning to tumble to what many astute junkies have known for some time that Nixon is a junkie, one of their own. They have secretly enjoyed watching Nixon “tripping through changes” during some of his televised addresses. They know that the phlebitis cover story is a bunch of crap put out by degenerate doctors at the behest of the degenerate establishment.

Nixon has been maintained on a narcotic regimen for a long time, during most of his years in the white house. This is true of a number of our political leaders, who could not otherwise live with their guilt feelings and sick consciences.

Anonymous

Dear Soho Weekly News:

Paranoid’s Scenario. Ford is killed in an “aircrash” or by a sudden “disease.” Carl Albert becomes President. Congress gets scared, immediately convenes in emergency session. nominates Rockefeller President “for the good of the country.”

Footnote to history: Albert would probably make a damn fine honest and intelligent President.

Name withheld because of paranoia.
New York City

Dear Soho Weekly News:

I liked your new exercise man. Smith — East-West. It stimulates one into movement. Dig everything. But what happened to it?

Thanks.
Beth
Your commitment to the Workforce campaign and advocacy is essential!

Visit our webpage: https://thearcofmass.org/workforce/
Contact Information

Ellen Taverna
Phone: 781-891-6270, ext. 112
Email: taverna@arcmass.org

Leo Sarkissian
Phone: 781-891-6270, ext. 106
Email: sarkissian@arcmass.org