



The Arc of Massachusetts FY26 Budget: Senate Amendment Priorities

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 appreciate the Senate Ways & Means Committee budget proposal and look forward to working with our legislative partners during this budget process. **Especially as the marginalized disability community faces great uncertainty and impending cuts from the federal government, it is critical that we have the support of our state lawmakers.**

We must prioritize taking care of the most vulnerable in our communities. Importantly, the initiatives below also provide critical cost-savings to the Commonwealth. Without them, ER visits and healthcare costs will increase, and the independence and economic productivity of individuals and families will drop dramatically.

As the Senate debates the FY26 budget, The Arc is advocating for the following amendments:

Amendment #437: Operation House Call (Sen. Lewis)

Operation House Call (OHC) is a program run by The Arc of Massachusetts that teaches students in medical, nursing, and other 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. This \$150,000 amendment would allow the program to continue to grow. The program currently reaches 1,200 medical and nursing students in MA.

Amendment #390: Nicky's Law Expansion (Sen. Moore)

This language amendment would expand the protections of Nicky's Law to those receiving services in MassHealth Day Habilitation programs. The Abuse Registry was signed into law by Gov. Baker in 2020. The registry is managed by the Disabled Persons Protection Commission (DPPC) and is successful in its intent to protect individuals with IDD by barring staff who have a substantiated finding of registrable abuse from working with this population. Currently, the registry only applies to those serving people who attend DDS-funded programs. Individuals in Day Habilitation programs, which are funded by MassHealth, are some of the most vulnerable. This amendment would expand the proven protections of Nicky's Law to those in Day Habilitation programs.

Amendment #499: Turning 22 (Sen. Jehlen)

Individuals with IDD, including autism, often stay in the school system until they turn 22, at which time they transition to adult services. At this transition, they often face a “cliff” where they lose access to critical services, interventions, and opportunities. The budget proposal reduced this line item, despite the [reality](#) that 1,400 people are currently unable to access programming. This \$6.7 million amendment will partially restore this line item, making progress towards increasing access to all who need such services.

Amendment #431: Mobile Crisis Training (Sen. Keenan)

This amendment would provide \$75,000 to ensure that mobile crisis teams have the tools to respond to individuals with autism and IDD who are in crisis. Currently, many individuals and families are not comfortable accessing mobile crisis services because the professionals are not trained to respond appropriately to their needs. The newest CDC prevalence for autism is 1 in 31. Our professionals must be trained on how to best respond to this growing and complex population. This is particularly critical for individuals with profound autism.

Amendment #424: DDS Community Day & Employment (Sen. Eldridge)

This line item funds community-based adult services, which provide meaningful support to adults with autism and IDD. According to a recent [survey](#) conducted by ADDP, there are over 2,400 people waiting for access to these services—leaving them isolated and regressing. This amendment seeks to restore this line item to the previous FY25 level, which would make an impact on these wait lists numbers.

Amendment #505: Human Service Wages (Sen. R. Kennedy)

We are aligned with other organizations, including ADDP and The Collaborative, to increase wages for direct support professionals. Currently, human service worker wages are set consistent with the 53rd percentile of the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Though our long-term goal is to increase this benchmark to the 75th percentile, recognizing current fiscal challenges, we support this language amendment. The amendment would ensure that in the interim, rates cannot be set below the 53rd percentile.

For More Information, Please Contact

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