



The Arc of Massachusetts FY27 Budget: Conference Committee 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 both the House & Senate budget proposals, which make some important investments. Especially at this time of great federal uncertainty and cuts, we need the steadfast support of our state leaders. As the Fiscal Year 2027 state budget is finalized, The Arc is advocating for the following amendments, which would support and strengthen our community.

The Workforce & Chapter 257 (1599-6903)

We appreciate that both budget proposals commit to maintaining Chapter 257 rates at the 53rd percentile of the Bureau of Labor Statistics. While our long-term goal is to raise rates to the 75th percentile, we understand that the current fiscal pressures are difficult.

However, both proposals have a gap of \$85 million in this line item. A full \$260 million is needed to reach the 53rd percentile, and just \$175 million is allocated. Our understanding is that this gap will be filled via a supplemental budget using remaining funds from FY26 caused by an inflation overestimate. **It is vital that this line item be fully funded at \$260 million.** We also acknowledge the language calling for a study of workforce rates, and **ask that you include the Senate's language, which references our goal of the 75th percentile.**

DESE-DDS Residential Placement Prevention Program (7061-0012)

This is a crucial program that allows for substantial supports in the home so that children and 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 safely at home. The program provides skills trainers, behavior and communication specialists, community support, ADL assistance and more. Crucially, this program also provides cost-savings to the Commonwealth, as it is significantly less expensive than residential placements. While some individuals and families will still require a residential placement to meet their needs, we must ensure that there is availability to access the DESE-DDS program for those who require its specific level of support.

We appreciate the \$10.5 million included in both the House and Senate proposals and are grateful for the \$1.2 million increase provided by the Senate. We request that in the final budget, this program be funded at \$11.7 million to serve more families.

Turning 22 Commission (Outside Section 37 & 4000-0300)

The Turning 22 transition process is a significant pain point for many families. While some young adults transition out of special education and into the adult system seamlessly, many face a “cliff” where they struggle to secure services. We are also seeing a growing turning 22 class each year, and a growing complexity.

We appreciate that the Senate included language from our Turning 22 bill to create a stakeholder Commission to bring state partners, advocates, and those with lived experience together to make necessary improvements to the process. Too many families face this devastating service cliff – but our state can fix this. **We request that this language and funding be included in the final budget.**

Operation House Call (5911-1003)

Operation House Call (OHC) is a program run by The Arc of Massachusetts – partnering with all Massachusetts Medical schools. OHC teaches 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 1,300 medical, nursing and dental students per year. There are also successful pilots underway with Regis College School of Nursing and Harvard School of Dental Medicine. The program is considered a national model. **The House included a \$150,000 amendment to enable OHC to provide this unique program and to continue to grow its reach and impact.** We ask for this be included in the final budget.

Workforce Training (4000-0300)

Building off a successful series of pilot initiatives by The Arc and Advocates for Autism of Massachusetts (AFAM), the Senate included an earmark to provide additional workforce training funds. The number of adults with autism and complex, challenging behaviors is growing, and our direct support workforce needs more training. This amendment provides important tools and expert training to better support individuals with the most challenging needs, such as those with profound autism. **We ask that this \$100,000 training earmark be included in the final budget.**

Personal Care Attendants (4000-0601)

The Arc of Massachusetts has been participating in a PCA Workgroup to develop proposals to ensure the sustainability of this vital program. Our role on this group is to ensure that the family and individual consumer perspective is included—this program is a life-line to health, safety, employment, healthcare access, activities of daily living and community inclusion. It is incredibly valuable to individuals and families across the Commonwealth, and while we understand the pressures on Medicaid and the need for sustainability, ensuring robust access to home and community based services is our priority.

Please include the House’s language ensuring that cuts will not be made until the working group agrees to recommendations. Ensuring that stakeholder input is vital.