



AFAM 2023-2024 Legislative Priorities

Workforce Priorities

Department of Developmental Disabilities (DDS) and MassHealth Workforce Rate Increase

An Act relative to rates for workers providing supports and services for individuals with disabilities

H. 171; S. 83

Representatives Sean Garballey and Simon Cataldo and Senator Barry Finegold

This bill addresses the severe workforce shortage for direct support staff, program managers, and clinicians such as nurses. It requires a minimum salary benchmark of the 75th percentile based on our state's bureau of labor statistics, which should put DSP benchmark pay in the \$20 per hour range. The bill includes all DDS services covered by the Chapter 257 rate process, and the Day Habilitation program which is covered by the MassHealth rate process.

Community College for Direct Support Professionals

An Act establishing a fund to further educational opportunities for caregivers to adults with disabilities

H. 1285; S. 812

Representative Dave Rogers and Senator Mike Barrett

This bill creates a pilot to provide free community college to direct support staff with two years of service.

An Act relative to family members serving as caregivers

H. 1232; S. 775

Representative James O'Day and Senator Joan Lovely

This bill allows guardians, caregivers, and others with legal standing to be paid for providing AFC and PCA services.

Police Training

Autism Police Training Expansion

An Act relative to police interactions with persons on the autism spectrum

H. 2351; S. 1568

Representative Kay Khan and Senator Mike Moore

An act relative to police training in appropriate interactions with persons on the autism spectrum and other intellectual and developmental disabilities, expanding on the mandated cadet training to include veteran officers and correctional officers through in-service training.

Supporting Autistic Drivers through the Blue Envelope Program

An Act facilitating better interactions between police officers and persons with autism spectrum disorder

H. 3359; S. 2204

Representatives Kay Khan and Mindy Domb and Senator Jo Comerford

This bill will facilitate understanding and better communication between law enforcement and autistic drivers. Autistic drivers can voluntarily request a blue envelope, which attaches to the car's visor. The envelope would hold the driver's license, registration, etc., as well as specific instructions for the police officer on the driver's diagnosis, impairments, triggers, and contact information.



Safety

An Act to Expand Nicky's Law to Day Habilitation Programs

An Act updating Nicky's Law to protect individuals with disabilities in MassHealth day habilitation programs

H. 141; S. 119

Representative Josh Cutler and Senator Mike Moore

This bill will require MassHealth Day Habilitation providers to use the abuse registry, expanding the protections of Nicky's Law to those in MassHealth Day Habilitation

Housing

Accessory Housing Units for People with Disabilities

An Act relative to accessory dwelling units

H. 1296; S. 904

Representative Christine Barber and Senator Bruce Tarr

This bill will allow the creation of accessory dwelling units for people with disabilities and older adults with an allowance for the owner occupier to be a special needs trust.

Equitable Access

ABA MassHealth for Adults

An Act ensuring equal access to medical treatments essential for people with a developmental disability, intellectual disability, or autism

H. 128; S. 97

Representative Christine Barber and Senator John Keenan

This bill will require MassHealth to cover applied behavior analysis services for adults with autism and intellectual and developmental disabilities, where ABA is a medical necessity. Also language included for Assistive Technology coverage.

Healthcare

Hospital Training to Enhance Healthcare for People with Autism and IDD

An Act to enhance hospital care for those with autism and intellectual and developmental disabilities

H. 172; S. 1401

Representatives Sean Garballey and Ryan Hamilton and Senator Jason Lewis

This bill will enhance hospital care for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, including autism, through training, standards of care and certification requirements.

Operation House Call

An Act improving health care for patients with intellectual and developmental disabilities including autism

H. 2221; S. 1398

Representative John Lawn and Senator Jason Lewis

This bill will improve healthcare for patients with intellectual and developmental disabilities, including autism, through training and certification, modeled after The Arc's Operation House Call



Education

An Act Relative to the Training, Assessment, and Assignment of Qualified School Interpreters in Educational Settings H. 437; S. 253

Representative Antonio Cabral and Senator Brendan Crighton

This legislation directs the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to increase access to qualified school interpreters by developing a system for training and assessing the qualifications of interpreters in educational settings. The bill authorizes DESE to adopt regulations that are needed to administer the system. Implementation would be phased in, subject to appropriation.

An Act to Ensure Equitable Access to Education, Including Special Education Services, for All Students in Massachusetts

H. 454; S. 249

Representative Marjorie Decker and Senator Cynthia Creem

This bill would require DESE to publish the data that it already collects in such a way that it can be easily cross-tabulated by race, sex, economic status, high needs status, English learner status and category of disability. For example, currently, DESE displays discipline data separately for Black students, male students, and students with disabilities. Under the proposed legislation, DESE would be required to display discipline data across these categories (i.e. for Black boys with disabilities).

An Act to Improve Augmentative and Alternative Communication Opportunities for Children with Disabilities H. 433; S. 326

Representative Christine Barber and Senator Patrick O'Connor

This legislation will help ensure that all teachers who apply for an initial Massachusetts educator license receive instruction on the appropriate use of augmentative and alternative communication devices for children with disabilities who are nonverbal or who have limited speech. The bill directs DESE to amend teacher licensure regulations as necessary to meet the needs of this population of students.