



# Dignity Votes 2022

A Dignity Alliance Massachusetts Initiative

Through the Dignity Votes 2022 initiative, Dignity Alliance Massachusetts has invited candidates for Congressional office to respond to a set of questions drafted specifically for the office. Dignity Alliance Massachusetts is a state-wide coalition of aging and disability service and advocacy organizations and supporters dedicated to the systemic transformation of long-term services, support, and care to ensure the dignity of older adults, people with disabilities, and caregivers.

## Candidate Response – James P. McGovern (D) Candidate for Congressional Representative (Incumbent) (Second District)

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**Question 1.** Most Massachusetts residents know someone who has needed long-term services or care due to issues related to aging or disabilities or experienced it themselves.

*Has anyone close to you needed nursing home care, congregate living arrangements, or home and community-based services, such as personal care assistants (PCAs)? What implications for public policy and regulatory enforcement do you draw from this experience?*

**Response to Q1:** I do have friends and family who have need home and community-based services and I've seen how meaningful the work of PSAs can be for a person's care. Ultimately, this has shown me that when a person can get care in the place where they're most comfortable, they can get better faster. If you're surrounded by people you know and have access to culturally appropriate food, you can get better faster. Care at home allows people to avoid in-facility illness and infection and have the dignity. We have to continue to support and fund home and community-based services.

**Question 2.** The Nursing Home Improvement and Accountability Act (S 2694 / HR 5169 in the 117th Congress) is one of several federal bills that we believe would help to correct serious shortcomings in nursing homes.

*Will you agree to support this legislation?*

**Response to Q2:** Yes, I am a cosponsor of the Nursing Home Improvement and Accountability Act. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us how necessary increased oversight and improvement to our nursing homes is. Vulnerable seniors should not be subjected to insufficient care or neglect and that's why I proudly support this legislation.

**Question 3.** Pre-pandemic, home and community-based staffing was a challenge. Post-pandemic, it has become a crisis, forcing many frail elders and persons with a disability to be at risk due to a lack of available caregivers and often facing nursing home placements.

*What can be done from the federal perspective to address this crisis?*

**Response to Question 3:** We need to provide better funding to make home and community-based care more accessible and more affordable. In Congress, we can do this by increasing federal Medicaid contributions to states and investing in these critical services.

**Question 4. A recent AARP survey of adults shows that 3 out of 4 adults aged 50 years and older want to remain at home and out of nursing homes by utilizing home and community-based services such as personal care assistants, home health aides, durable medical equipment, and / or technology.**

***What do you see as key components of a robust system of home and community-based services? What will you do to advocate for them? Do you support increased funding for home and community-based supports and services?***

**Response to Question 4:** I absolutely support increasing funding for home and community-based supports and services. The reality is health outcomes are far better when a person receives their care at home. Although these provisions didn't make it into the reconciliation package the house passed in August, I'm committed to continuing to advocate for increased funding for home and community-based care at the federal level.

**Question 5. Social Security and Medicare provide essential support for older adults and people with disabilities.**

***What have you done (will you do) to protect and enhance these vital programs and will you pledge to fight against attempts to weaken or repeal them?***

**Response to Question 5:** Medicare and Social Security are vital programs that help our seniors meet their day-to-day needs. I have long supported legislation that would repeal the Windfall Elimination Provision and Government Pension Offset to ensure that Social Security recipients get the full benefits they're entitled to. I also was proud to vote in favor of the Inflation Reduction Act, which finally allows Medicare to negotiate prescription drug prices, and caps out-of-pocket spending on prescription drugs at \$2000/year and copays on insulin at \$35/month for Medicare beneficiaries. Extremist Republicans may want to slash Social Security and Medicare, but my Democratic colleagues and I are committed to protecting these hard earned and necessary benefits for our seniors.

**Question 6. Individuals with disabilities are over three times more likely than non-disabled people to be sexually assaulted, according to federal statistics, putting them at high risk of needing access to affordable reproductive health services including abortion.**

***With the Supreme Court's recent ruling overturning Roe v. Wade, how will you, as a Member of Congress, work to protect the reproductive and other rights of women living with disabilities both in Massachusetts and those looking to come to Massachusetts from other more restrictive states?***

**Response to Question 6.** The Republican plot to criminalize abortion in every state is horrifying and dramatically out of touch with the desires of the majority of Americans. In Congress, I've proudly voted in favor of three pieces of legislation that protect a woman's health and life: the Women's Health Protection Act which makes the protections of Roe v. Wade law, the Ensuring Women's Right to Reproductive Freedom which stops the criminalization of women who seek abortion care across state lines, and the Right to Contraception Act which protects the right to obtain and use all forms of birth control. Ultimately, we know stripping away these rights will most adversely affect Black and brown women, disabled women, and low-income women. Reproductive care is healthcare and I'm committed to protecting this care for all women.

**Question 7. The safety, well-being, and rights of persons with disabilities and older adults living in public as well as subsidized housing have had little or no protection. Issues include but are not limited to failure to protect victims from bullying and mobbing; failure to grant reasonable accommodations to disabled persons; and evictions leading to homelessness and emotional and physical trauma. Accountability is lacking.**

***What can the Department of Housing and Development and other federal agencies do to assure the safety and rights of people in these situations?***

**Response to Question 7.** The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the dire need for public and subsidized housing. I'm proud to support funding for the Fair Housing Initiatives Program and the Fair Housing Assistance Program in the FY23 Appropriations bill to ensure that no one experiences discrimination in \_\_\_\_\_

housing. Sustaining these programs helps the Department of Housing and Urban Development provide services and support to people with disabilities, as well older adults.

**Question 8. Affordable, accessible transportation is lacking across the state.**

*What measures will you support to ensure elders and those with disabilities can access dependable, safe, and affordable transportation to allow them to live fully in their community?*

**Response to Question 8.** I was proud to support the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law which historically invests in our roads, bridges, and public transportation. This law includes funding to improve U.S. Rail Systems and make public transportation rail stations accessible for everyone. This law also includes funding to make airport terminals more accessible and it establishes a Passengers with Disabilities Bill of Rights to ensure that every person with disabilities can safely access air travel. So many people rely on public transportation in this country and for it to be equitable, it must be accessible.

**Question 9. Census data show 12 to 15 % of the population identify as living with a disability and 20% are older adults.**

*Will you commit to hiring individuals as staff members with disabilities and older adults? Will you ensure your staff are reflective of the general population with diversity?*

**Response to Question 9.** I think it's incredibly important and necessary to have a staff who reflect the diversity of the general population and specifically, of my district. We need people with a variety of experiences and perspectives to do the work that keeps our democracy strong. I'm committed to having older adults, people with disabilities, and individuals from marginalized/underrepresented groups on my staff.

**Question 10. Age discrimination in the workplace is experienced by many older workers.**

*Do you support proposals such as S 880 /HR 2062 in the 117th Congress to protect older workers from discrimination?*

**Response to Question 10.** Yes! I proudly voted in favor of H.R. 2062 when it came to the House Floor June 23rd, 2021. No one should be discriminated against for their age. Older workers deserve to be treated with dignity and to be protected from any unjust treatment.

**Brief profile of James P. McGovern:**

James McGovern was elected to Congress in 1996. Currently, he serves as the Chair of the House Rules Committee and is a member of the House Agriculture Committee. He also serves as co-chair of both the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission and the House Hunger Caucus. Prior to serving in Congress, he was a senior aide for the late U.S. Representative John Joseph Moakley. He has Bachelor of Arts ('81) and Masters of Public Administration ('84) degrees from The American University.

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**Dignity Alliance Massachusetts** is a state-wide, grass-roots coalition of aging and disability service and advocacy organizations and supporters dedicated to systemic transformation to ensure the dignity of older adults, people with disabilities, and caregivers. We are committed to advancing new ways of providing long-term services, support, living options, and care while respecting choice and self-determination. Dignity Alliance works through education, legislation, regulatory reform, and legal strategies to realize this vision throughout the Commonwealth.

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