



The Dignity Dozen –

Dignity Sponsored Legislative Proposals for 2023-2024

Bills to improve the lives of older adults, people with disabilities,
and their caregivers

The main difference between our **sponsored bills** and **endorsed bills** is that **sponsored bills** indicate a **concerted effort** where Dignity Alliance takes a leadership role in the coalition and strategic meetings to get this passed. Endorsed bills, generally bills sponsored by participants in Dignity Alliance, are lent the name of our coalition, we offer testimony and meetings with target legislators to assist in moving the bill along, when possible. A list of our endorsed bills is found at the end of the sponsored bills in the Dignity Dozen.

NOTE: Docket Numbers are temporary. Permanent numbers will be assigned when bills are referred to committees

- 1. An Act to improve quality and safety in nursing homes**
SPONSOR - Rep. Carol Doherty; HD 1114



- carol.doherty@mahouse.gov

Section 1. According to the National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care, research has shown that staffing in nursing homes - numbers of staff, skills mix, and training - are critical indicators of quality care and positive resident outcomes. Yet too many nursing homes are understaffed, and the long-term care industry claims it does not have the resources to hire more staff. But is that really true given the provisions of this bill to expand the number and quality of potential staff? The purpose of this section is to promote sufficient professional staff for nursing homes to improve quality and safety for residents and staff. This change is also expected to be incorporated in new CMS regulations being advanced by the Biden Administration.

Section 2. Purpose is to encourage efforts to place a resident back in their community.

Section 3. Research, as well as the COVID pandemic experience clearly demonstrates that viruses are easily transmitted when people live in close quarters. Two or less residents per room, as recommended by the Governor, offers more privacy, as well as safety.

Section 4. Purpose is to develop a system to ensure that the human rights of all residents and staff of nursing homes are protected.

Section 5. Research has shown that clients of the Department of Mental Health and Department of Developmental Services enjoy rights that are not given to residents of nursing homes. This will equalize the rights of all residents.

**2. An Act relative to transparency and accountability in nursing homes.
SPONSORS - Sen. Patricia Jehlen SD880 Rep. Sally Kerans**



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This bill, commencing with fiscal years ending December 31, 2025, would, except as specified, require an organization that operates, conducts, owns, manages, or maintains one or more nursing homes to prepare and file with the office an annual consolidated financial report that includes data from all operating entities, license holders, and related parties in which the organization has an ownership or control interest of 5% or more and that provides any service, facility, or supply to the nursing home. The bill would require a duly authorized

official of the organization to certify the report, as specified. The bill would require the Department of Public Health with the Center for Health Information to develop policies and procedures to outline the format of information to be submitted, determine if the annual consolidated financial report is complete, and post those reports and related documents to its website. California, New York, and New Jersey are among the states leading efforts to establish the true financial cost that taxpayers and policy makers need to know before supplementing appropriations whether for staff or any other operational need. Nursing home owners and operators need to place people over profits.

3. An Act to improve quality and accountability in assisted living residences. SPONSOR- Sen. Mark Montigny/ SD 2131



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This act requires assisted living residences to have and maintain automatic external defibrillation devices and train staff in the use of such equipment, updates a reference in the membership in the Assisted Living Advisory Council to recognize the creation of the secretary of housing, and provides for a human rights committee in each ALR to protect the rights of residents.

4. An Act relative to community living for older adults and people with disabilities. SPONSOR - Rep. Josh Cutler HD 2111



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This act encourages participation of older adults and people with disabilities to participate in community life by amending the Open Meeting law to ensure that these groups have access to local and state government activities.

Subject to local acceptance, the bill allows reduction in property taxes to keep living in communities affordable, provides Architectural Access Board regulations to apply to renovation as well as new construction to promote greater accessibility, protects homes of older adults and people with disabilities from being acquired in payment of MassHealth costs, encourages the construction of accessory dwelling for older adults and people with disabilities, authorizes personal care homes for older adults, and prevents bullying in public housing.

Finally, it establishes a special commission on alternatives to arrest and incarceration for individuals with developmental or intellectual disabilities. This has been problematic for individuals who act out in public, but are generally not responsible for their actions. Police sometimes misjudge the situation, and the incident can escalate to the detriment of both the individual and the police. The commission will look at solutions to this problem.

5. An Act promoting accessible dwellings for older adults and people with disabilities to remain in their communities.

SPONSOR - Rep. Kate Lipper-Garabedian HD 3811



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(Based on Dignity endorsed legislation from 2021-2022 session) *This bill encourages home modification for seniors to help them remain in their homes as they age, promotes expanding the availability of adaptive housing for consumers with disabilities, mobility impairments and older adults, expands the authority of the Architectural Barriers Board to cover renovations as well as new construction to promote accessibility, and establishes a livable home modernization program,*

6. An Act to Improve Opportunities for discharge from acute care facilities.

SPONSOR - Rep. Lindsay Sabadosa; HD 3373



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This bill promotes a more robust hospital discharge program requiring consideration of placements in the community with appropriate services and support, rather than always referring patients to nursing homes.

7. An Act to improve long-term care staffing and dignity for caregivers.

SPONSORS - Sen. Bruce Tarr SD 2339 Rep. Manny Cruz HD 3738



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This bill would establish a career ladder for home care workers, create a family caregiver tax credit, authorize spouses to serve as paid caregivers, strengthen emergency preparedness for home care workers and protect the health and safety of home care workers.

8. An Act to improve resilience of older adults and people with disabilities during emergencies. SPONSOR Sen. Bruce Tarr – SD 2338



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This bill provides that in the event of a public health emergency or other natural or technological disaster, the secretaries of health and human service and elder affairs shall coordinate the response of the public health officer, emergency responders, and public safety personnel relative to protecting older adults and people with disabilities in (1) demographic, (2) physical, (3) psychological, (4) spiritual, and (5) socio-cultural factors. The act would direct councils on aging that receive state funding develop emergency plans to protect older adults and the disabled in their communities. The bill directs the executive office of housing to develop a grant program, subject to appropriation, to make homes of older adults and people with disabilities more resilient to disasters and to improve home safety.

9. An Act to establish the office of elder advocate.

SPONSORS - Rep. Josh Cutler HD881; Sen. Jake Oliveira SD924



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The bill is completely new this term, and establishes an office of elder advocate within, but not subject to the control of, the Executive Office of Elder Affairs with the authority to respond to complaints for residents or staff of nursing homes, rest homes, as well as assisted living residences.

It is modelled on the current statute that established the Office of Child Advocate. The office has the authority to initiate a complaint on its own without need for one to be submitted if it believes there may be probable cause of a violation of the rights of residents.

If the office is established, it will add an important new tool to support consumers and staff in long-term care, and supplement the oversight of the Department of Public Health (responsible for nursing homes and rest homes) and the Executive Office of Elder Affairs (responsible for assisted living residences).

10. An Act to ease the tax burden on older adults and people with disabilities. SPONSORS - Rep. Carol Doherty; HD 1137; Sen. Jake Oliveira SD 911



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The bill includes easing taxes on older adults, as recommended in the plan proposed by the Baker administration, including expanded eligibility for the senior circuit breaker program that benefits elder home owners and renters.

In addition, the bill includes a tax credit for family caregivers. Caregivers provide a variety of services for senior citizens and people with disabilities every year. Often, these caregivers are taking care of their parents or loved ones and will pay for medical expenses with their own money. Such dedicated caregivers would be eligible to receive this caretaker tax break and deduction. These deductions help defray the cost of taking care of loved ones, allowing the best care possible.

An Act to protect dignity, privacy, and safety of residents in nursing homes and rest homes SPONSOR - Rep. Thomas Walsh HD 3256



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The bill codifies the current Department of Public Health policy of not more than two residents per room and promotes the goal of single occupancy, except at the request of the resident for a semi-private room. A penalty is included for non-compliance with submission and implementation of a plan to provide such residential arrangements. The purpose of requiring not more than two residents per room is to minimize spread of infections, maximize personal privacy of the residents, and provide a dignified living arrangement.

11.An Act protecting the rights of older adults and people with disabilities SPONSOR - Senator Becca Rausch SD 2048;



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This bill improves enforcement of the rights of older adults and people with disabilities by making the rights of nursing home residents consistent with rights granted by the departments of mental health and developmental disabilities, establishes a human rights protection organization in each nursing home, and directs the department of public health to train human rights committees and to oversee the program.

**12. An Act to establish a COVID-19 Remembrance Day –
SPONSORS Sen. Patricia Jehlen, SD878; Rep. Ruth Balser**



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This bill creates a new provision in the general laws, requiring the governor to annually issues a proclamation to remember the tragedy of the COVID-19 pandemic, to honor victims and survivors and their families who suffered from this pandemic, especially residents of nursing homes, and to take stock in the collective ability of public and private organizations and individuals on preparedness in the Commonwealth for future events that result in a declaration of a state of emergency.

Dignity Endorsed – Legislative Proposals Sponsored by Others and Supported by Dignity for 2023-2024

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DIGNITY HALF DOZEN

- 1. Supported Decision-Making:** Sen. Joan Lovely [Bill SD.1172 \(malegislature.gov\)](#) Rep. Christopher Markey [Bill HD.3278 \(malegislature.gov\)](#)
- 2. Protecting the Homes of Seniors and Disabled People on MassHealth:** Sen. Joanne Comerford [Bill SD.259 \(malegislature.gov\)](#) Rep. Christine Barber [Bill HD.472 \(malegislature.gov\)](#)
- 3. Pharmaceutical Access, Cost, and Transparency:** Sen. Cindy Friedman [Bill SD.2232 \(malegislature.gov\)](#)
- 4. Expanding Wheelchair Warranty Protections for Consumers with Disabilities:** Sen. John Cronin [Bill SD.212 \(malegislature.gov\)](#)
- 5. Preserve Special Needs Trust for Disabled Seniors:** Sen. Pat Jehlen [Bill SD.1832 \(malegislature.gov\)](#) Rep. Kate Hogan [Bill HD.3327 \(malegislature.gov\)](#)

PUBLIC GUARDIAN SERVICES

- 6. Establishing Guardians as Providers of Medical Care to Support the Rights of Incapacitated Persons:** Sen. Joan Lovely [Bill SD.698 \(malegislature.gov\)](#) Rep. Sally Kerans [Bill HD.1727 \(malegislature.gov\)](#)

ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION OF MA&NH

- 7. Relative to Early Onset Alzheimer's Disease** Sen. Rep. Bruce Ayers [Bill HD.1175 \(malegislature.gov\)](#)

- 8. Improve Alzheimer's and dementia care in Senior Care Options program** Sen. Jason Lewis [Bill SD.945 \(malegislature.gov\)](http://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/SD945) Rep. Danielle Gregoire [Bill HD.830 \(malegislature.gov\)](http://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/HD830)

SEIU 1199

- 9. Address the overuse of temporary nursing service agencies at Massachusetts skilled nursing facilities** (Sen. Liz Miranda <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/SD1042> ; Rep. Balser <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/HD3451>)
- 10. Improve infection control in Massachusetts home care** (Sen. Pavel Payano <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/SD877> ; Rep. Rita Mendes <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/HD1013>)
- 11. Improve Massachusetts home care** (Sen. Pat Jehlen <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/SD1245> ; Rep. Tom Stanley <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/HD2201>)
- 12. Improve quality and oversight of long-term care** (Sen. Pat Jehlen <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/SD1244> ; Rep Tom Stanley <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/HD2564>)
- 13. Promote an enhanced care worker minimum wage** (Sen. Robyn Kennedy <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/SD1285>; Rep. Tram Nguyen <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/HD636>)

AARP MASSACHUSETTS

- 14. Ensure quality of care in nursing homes** Rep. Ruth Balser [Bill HD.3443 \(malegislature.gov\)](http://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/HD3443)
- 15. Strengthening to Attorney General's tools to protect nursing home residents and other patients from abuse and neglect** - Rep. Ruth Balser <file:///C:/Users/Owner/Downloads/HD3662.pdf> - Rep. Ruth Balser [Bill HD.3649 \(malegislature.gov\)](http://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/HD3649) (17 and 18 are identical)

16. Establishing a family caregivers tax credit. Rep. David Rogers [Bill HD.2376 \(malegislature.gov\)](#)

17. Encourage retirement planning Rep. Paul Donato [Bill HD.2450 \(malegislature.gov\)](#) Sen. Sal DiDomenico [Bill SD.2088 \(malegislature.gov\)](#)

MassNAELA

18. Protecting the rights of assisted living residents. Sen. Mark Montigny. [Bill SD.2080 \(malegislature.gov\)](#)

Mass Chapter NASW

19. Create and implement a Massachusetts Flexible Supportive House Subsidy Pool Program Sen. Brendan Crighton [Bill SD.674 \(malegislature.gov\)](#) Rep. Joan Meschino <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/HD216>

MCOA (ALSO SUPPORTED BY aarop)

20. Relative to Councils on Aging'- Sen. Rebecca Rausch <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/SD1382> ; Rep. Kate Donaghue <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/HD3449>

NOTE: Senior citizen real estate exemption/valuation changes that would make it easier for seniors to remain in their home and reducing their real estate tax bills. AARP is supporting the bills that were also submitted by MCOA, but at the moment I don't recall the sponsors names.