



## **Joint Committee on Elder Affairs 5/15/23 Hearing**

### **S.115, S.375, and H.626, An Act increasing the personal care allowance for long term care residents -CORRECTED VERSION**

**Sponsor: Sen. Mark Montigny**

May 15, 2023

Senator Patricia Jehlen  
Joint Committee on Elder Affairs, Chair  
Delivered by email: [Patricia.Jehlen@masenate.gov](mailto:Patricia.Jehlen@masenate.gov)

Representative Thomas M. Stanley  
Joint Committee on Elder Affairs, Chair  
Delivered by email: [Thomas.Stanley@mahouse.gov](mailto:Thomas.Stanley@mahouse.gov)

Dear Chair Jehlen and Chair Stanley:

Dignity Alliance Massachusetts (Dignity Alliance) is providing this testimony in strong support of S115, S375, H626, to increase the personal needs allowance for long-term care residents.

We support these bills since an increase in the PNA is clearly long over-due! Dignity Alliance commends Senator Mark Montigny (S115), Senator Patricia Jehlen (S.375) and Representative Sean Garballey (H626), joined by several other legislators, who have filed bills to raise the Personal Needs Allowance to \$100. That's a start! The facts actually justify an even higher amount.

What is the personal needs allowance? According to the American Council on Aging, "Medicaid's Personal Needs Allowance (PNA) is the amount of monthly income a Medicaid-funded nursing home resident can keep of their personal income. Since room, board, and medical care are covered by Medicaid, the majority of one's income must go towards the cost of nursing home care. The PNA is intended to cover the nursing home resident's personal expenses, which are not covered by Medicaid. This may include but is not limited to haircuts, vitamins, clothing, magazines, and vending machine snacks.

“Federal law requires that a Medicaid-funded nursing home resident receive a Personal Needs Allowance. Authorized by the Supplemental Security Act Amendments of 1972, and enacted in 1974, the federally mandated PNA was set at \$25 / month. The 1987 Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act, effective in 1988, increased it to \$30 / month, where it still remains. Each state, however, can allow for a higher Personal Needs Allowance, up to a maximum of \$200 / month. While the PNA amount varies by state, it ranges between \$30 / month and \$200 / month. Under certain circumstances, if a nursing home resident does not have their own monthly income, the Personal Needs Allowance is provided by the state in which one resides.”<sup>1</sup>

Massachusetts ranks below the top ten state which provide a more generous allowance. That’s outrageous! Alaska offers \$200. Even Ron DeSantis’ Florida is more generous with a \$130 personal needs allowance! Can’t Massachusetts do better than Florida, or even, Alaska. It doesn’t seem too much to ask to set the rate in Massachusetts at no less than \$200.

The nursing home industry takes all but \$72.80 of the resident’s Social Security check (if they receive a check) otherwise, state government which sets the rate of the Personal Needs Allowance above the federal \$30 minimum.

However, if you consider that the \$72.80 rate was set over thirty years ago, the allowance should be at least \$150 today with inflation. There should also be a cost-of-living provision so that the allowance retains its buying power. While legislators who support an increase in the Personal Needs Allowance through the pending bill, there’s actually a faster way to help our vulnerable older adults in nursing homes. The Legislature could simply amend line item 4000-0601 as proposed in EHS # 562 by replacing the amount of \$72.80 with at least \$150. Such an amendment could provide almost immediate relief, rather than waiting to next year to see if the Jehlen/Garballey legislation passes.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding such important issues to protect nursing home residents. We must strive to make improvements to ensure the safety and dignity of all living in long-term care.

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Dignity Alliance Massachusetts, a grass-roots coalition of aging and disability service and advocacy organizations and supporters, works to secure fundamental changes in the provision of long-term services, support, and care. A coalition of more than 30 organizations, committed to a new vision of dignity and care for older and disabled people in Massachusetts! Positions are not necessarily the opinions of all members.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.medicaidplanningassistance.org/personal-needs-allowance>