



The Dignity Digest

Issue # 160

October 31, 2023

The Dignity Digest is information compiled by Dignity Alliance Massachusetts concerning long-term services, support, living options, and care issued each Monday.

***May require registration before accessing article.**

Spotlight

[**Help people with disabilities live in the community**](#)

***The Boston Globe**

By The Editorial Board

October 27, 2023 (updated)

Unnecessary segregation in nursing homes ‘has been linked to accelerated mental, emotional, and physical decline’ when residents have little autonomy and little ability to engage in outside activities, a lawsuit says.

For many people with disabilities, living in a nursing home is a last resort. Maybe they lost their housing after a lengthy hospital stay. Maybe their care needs became too much for a spouse or child to handle. While some people need round-the-clock care, others may be able to live in the community — if they had more support.

A lawsuit filed in the US District Court in Boston last year by people with disabilities and their advocates, [David Marsters v. Maura Healey](#), seeks to force the state’s Executive Office of Health and Human Services to move more people with disabilities out of nursing homes and into community settings, with supportive services.

Simultaneously, the US Department of Justice is investigating whether state government is violating the Americans with Disabilities Act by not helping people with disabilities transition from institutions back to their communities. A Healey administration official said the state is cooperating with the investigation, which began in July 2022 and has not issued any findings.

The Healey administration entered mediation last week in an attempt to reach a settlement with the lawsuit’s plaintiffs. Two similar suits, settled during former governor Deval Patrick’s administration, resulted in the transition of thousands of people with brain injuries and intellectual and developmental disabilities from nursing homes into community settings, with enhanced support. A similar settlement covering all people with disabilities would be the right way to resolve the litigation and, more importantly, to provide quality care for people in the settings where they are most comfortable.

“We want people to be able to have a choice of living in the community versus remaining in institutional care,” said Carolyn Villers, executive director of Massachusetts Senior Action Council, an advocacy group for seniors which is also one of the plaintiffs.

A spokesperson for the Executive Office of Health and Human Services said the Healey administration is committed to serving residents with disabilities and complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act and continues “to make significant investments in home- and community-based services to help individuals live in the communities of their choice.”

Other than the Massachusetts Senior Action Council, the plaintiffs are all people with disabilities — physical and mental — who are living in nursing homes but would prefer to live in a residential setting. All could potentially have their needs addressed in the community. Their attorneys, led by Steven Schwartz of the Center for Public Representation, an Easthampton-based public interest law firm, are seeking certification for a class action to represent all people with disabilities in nursing homes.

The plaintiffs’ complaint argues that unnecessary segregation in nursing homes “has been linked to accelerated mental, emotional, and physical decline,” when residents have little autonomy and little ability to engage in outside activities. Massachusetts has home- and community-based services that provide assistance to people in their homes, but the lawsuit argues that these are insufficient to help everyone who could benefit.

The plaintiffs say this violates the Americans with Disabilities Act as interpreted by a 1999 [US Supreme Court ruling](#), which found that unnecessary institutionalization of individuals with disabilities constitutes discrimination.

When the Healey administration sought to have the case dismissed on procedural grounds, the US Department of Justice [weighed in](#) in favor of allowing the case to proceed. The Justice Department [recently sued](#) Colorado on similar grounds, arguing that the state is violating the ADA by unnecessarily institutionalizing people with physical disabilities in nursing homes.

There are approximately 22,000 adults with disabilities on Medicaid in nursing homes, according to the Massachusetts lawsuit. Former state elder affairs secretary Paul Lanzikos, cofounder of Dignity Alliance Massachusetts, which advocates for community-based care for seniors, estimated that 15,000 to 17,000 of them have clinical needs that could be met in the community.

The state is making some efforts to offer these services. Massachusetts offers multiple [home- and community-based care](#) programs, each applying to a different population, like autistic children or frail elders. AARP [ranked Massachusetts](#) fourth nationwide for providing long-term services and supports. In 2021, the state [committed to using](#) \$500 million in American Rescue Plan Act money by 2024 to improve access to home- and community-based services, including developing the workforce, enhancing access, and improving technology. But, as is detailed in the lawsuit, programs are capped in how many people they

	<p>can accept and there are gaps in services — for example, there is a need for case managers to work with nursing home residents to identify community-based housing options.</p> <p>Disability rights advocates are hoping the lawsuit results in an expansion of the options counseling program, where caseworkers help people in nursing homes or at risk of entering nursing homes understand the range of services available to them and how to access them. Another goal is an expansion of community-based programs to serve more people and ensure equal accessibility statewide. A third is a commitment — similar to commitments made in the earlier two settlements — to move some number of people out of nursing homes each year.</p> <p>Villers said she would like to see creative programs established, as has been done with the populations involved in the earlier settlements, like roommate programs, where two people with disabilities share an apartment and services or where a caregiver roommate provides evening assistance in exchange for free housing.</p> <p>The time is ripe for Massachusetts to settle the lawsuit. Massachusetts just got approved to participate in a program that makes more federal Medicaid money available for initiatives that move people out of nursing homes with community supports. The federal ARPA money can bolster community-based services.</p> <p>Any settlement probably would not involve an immediate sea change but instead a gradual expansion of services while moving a few hundred people a year out of nursing homes, if they choose to leave. Since community-based services tend to be less expensive than institutional care, that could potentially save money for the taxpayers who fund Medicaid while providing more fulfilling lives for people with disabilities.</p>
Quotes	<p><i>"Ensuring that residents of nursing homes in Massachusetts are provided with dignified, high-quality care is critically important, and has long been a priority of the House. Over the next few weeks, the House intends to vote on legislation that seeks to enhance oversight and bring greater accountability to the long-term care industry, as well as improve direct care staff recruitment and retention."</i></p> <p>Speaker of the Massachusetts House of Representatives Ronald Mariano, House, Senate Health Care Priority Bills On The Move, State House News, October 26, 2023</p>

“We want people to be able to have a choice of living in the community versus remaining in institutional care.”

Carolyn Villers, executive director of Massachusetts Senior Action Council, plaintiff organization in the class action lawsuit, [David Marsters v. Maura Healey](#), [Help people with disabilities live in the community](#), *The Boston Globe, October 27, 2023 (updated)

“This [Connecticut] law is aimed at providing transparency that identifies all owners and entities affiliated with the proposed ownership of a nursing home. While it does not specifically say the intent of the law is to discourage private equity ownership of nursing homes, this is almost certainly the case. CMS is highly distrustful of private equity ownership of nursing homes. Laws like this one in Connecticut are likely targeted at ferreting out private equity ownership of nursing homes.”

Attorney Todd J. Selby, [Advocates warn of slower sales as nursing home ownership law begins](#), McKnight's Long-Term Care News, October 25, 2023

As part of any settlement, the state needs to invest in personal care attendants, home health aides and homemakers from the money that will be saved by emptying nursing home beds that suffer from the inability to retain staff because of poor wages and excessive numbers needing care. Some progress has been made in the recent PCA contract, but more is needed, especially for other community care givers. Allowing spouses to be paid caregivers would be a good step and there's pending legislation to help move toward that goal. S.67 and H. 216 among the bills to do this and are endorsed by Dignity Alliance and AARP. Most nursing homes are failing to provide staff despite increases in taxpayer funded reimbursements. They are offering safe, high-quality care for those with disabilities or older adults. Not only those with disabilities, who would be aided by a responsible settlement of the Marsters v. Healey case, but the 88% of older adults who want to stay in their homes and

communities will benefit and the need will only grow as the state's population grows to 20% over age 65.

Former State Senator Richard Moore, Chair DignityMA Legislative Workgroup, responding to the **Boston Globe** editorial, in the comment section of [Help people with disabilities live in the community](#)

Overall, one-fourth of nursing home residents use personal savings or long-term care insurance benefits to cover their care, whereas two-thirds rely on Medicaid as their primary payer and 13% rely on Medicare, according to KFF data. The median cost of a semi-private room at a nursing home is approximately \$7,908 per month or \$94,900 annually.

[Rise in nursing home costs 'drastically' affects middle class: analysis](#), McKnight's Senior Living, October 25, 2023

“Based on manufacturing capacity and currently available stock, there are not sufficient 100-mg dose prefilled syringes of nirsevimab to protect all eligible infants weighing [11 pounds or more] during the current RSV season. Additionally, supply of the 50-mg dose prefilled syringes may be limited during the current RSV season. CDC continues to work with the manufacturer to understand how it may accelerate nirsevimab supply.”

Centers for Disease and Prevention Statement, [CDC recommends rationing of RSV shot due to shortages](#), STAT News, October 24, 2023

One recent study found that last summer's heat waves killed more than 61,000 people across Europe, most of them women over 80. In Switzerland, more than 60 percent of about 600 heat-related deaths last summer were attributed to global warming, according to a study from the University of Bern, with older women having the highest mortality rate.

[Heat Waves Are Killing Older Women. Are They Also Violating Their Rights?](#), New York Times (free access), August 7, 2023

“We're stuck in a time warp about what it means to be an older adult. The expectation is that people stop working at

65, and that's just not the case. There's a big challenge to change our framework and our perception of what it means to be an older adult."

Elizabeth White, an author and aging solutions advocate, [Workforce equity: Employers stuck in 'time warp' about older workers](#), HRDive, October 20, 2023

"It is a blind spot when people overlook the real attributes that older workers can bring to a workforce, to a business, but when employers believe myths and stereotypes about older workers not wanting to work or being digitally incompetent, it can become ageism. Ageism actually exists, and it's more than a blind spot. It shows up as prejudice. It shows up in stereotyping, and it results in people actually being pushed out."

Janine Vanderburg, CEO of Encore Roadmap, [Workforce equity: Employers stuck in 'time warp' about older workers](#), HRDive, October 20, 2023

The leading role played by older folks is something the country may have to get accustomed to: A decade from now, according to federal population projections, the United States will be home to more people over 65 than those under 18 — a complete reversal of the current picture.

[Older Americans are dominating like never before, but what comes next?](#), Washington Post (free access), October 24, 2023

"Experience matters, [but] [w]e stay longer in leadership because we're selfish. I'm sitting here talking to you and there's no way I should be alive. We're benefiting from the wonderful private medical system: I had my aortic valve replaced with a bull's valve. I just had a pacemaker installed this spring. I have two bad knees and I had one repaired. We're all living longer, 20 years longer than our fathers lived."

Jack Fitzgerald, age 88, who owns more than a dozen auto dealerships in the District of Columbia–Maryland–Virginia area and South Florida, [Older Americans are dominating like never before, but what comes next?](#), Washington Post (free access), October 24, 2023

“A facility may have a very high star rating, which comes from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, based on delivery of the clinical aspect of care: Are you providing meds on time? Are you adhering to all these other regulations? That does not translate in all cases to a home-like environment and loving care.”

Margaret Barajas, Pennsylvania’s long-term care ombudsman, [Nursing home rating system criticized over reliability, accuracy](#) (Tribune-Review, October 29, 2023)

Around two million grandparents are responsible for the basic needs of their grandchildren, with such caregiving concentrated in historically disadvantaged communities. . . Grandparents often become caregivers to grandchildren after an adult child is no longer available due to death, incarceration, or substance abuse.

[“Could Social Security Child Benefits Help Grandparent Caregivers?”](#) , The Center for Retirement Research at Boston College, October 24, 2023

“The defendants involved in these two settlements not only failed to comply with the necessary standards for providing critical services to a vulnerable population with autism spectrum disorder, but also fraudulently exploited public funds.”

Attorney General Andrea Campbell, [AG Campbell Announces More Than \\$2.5 Million In Fraud Settlements With Two Autism Services Providers](#), Office of the Attorney General, October 27, 2023

“This is simply not going to be solved by putting more resources and money at it. If we don’t have the right policies, we’re defeating ourselves.”

Representative Bill Pascrell Jr., Democrat of New Jersey, addressing the failures of the Social Security system’s disability program, [Lawmakers grill Social Security leader over disability system’s failures](#) (*Boston Globe, October 27, 2023)

Life Well Lived

Deborah Thomson

Deborah (Deb) Thomson, 74, passed away on October 19, 2023, from Parkinson's disease.

Deb was a lifelong advocate for older persons elderly and persons with



disabilities. After graduating from Penn State and George Washington School of Law, she began her legal services career in 1975 as an elder law attorney at Tri-County Legal Aid in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. In 1981 she, her husband and two dogs, moved to Lowell, Massachusetts where she had been hired as head of the elder law unit at Merrimack Valley Legal Services. She then worked at the Office of the Massachusetts Attorney General, The Massachusetts Law Reform Institute and as Policy Director for the Massachusetts Alzheimer's Association.

She left the Alzheimer's Association to start a one-person lobbying firm, The Pass Group, where she represented elder and disability groups in the state legislature. Among her many awards, in 2014 the Massachusetts Chapter of the National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys created the Deborah H. Thomson Advocacy Award, with Deb as its first recipient.

She is survived by her partner of 45 years, Jim Breslauer, their son Andy Nguyen, grandchildren Sandra and Eric Nguyen, her sister Barbara Thomson and her niece Meredith Hoffman-Thomson. Deb was intelligent, articulate and really cared. She is missed by many.

May she rest in peace.
[No services have been announced.]

November: National Family Caregivers Month

1. Administration on Community Living

October 20, 2021

[National Family Caregivers Month](#)

About the Observance

Celebrated every November, National Family Caregivers Month (NFCM) is a time to recognize and honor family caregivers across the country. It offers an opportunity to raise awareness of caregiving issues, educate communities, and increase support for caregivers.

The national observance is spearheaded by [Caregiver Action Network \(CAN\)](#), a nonprofit that provides free education, peer support, and resources to family caregivers. CAN announced the 2021 theme, **#CaregiverAnd** which encourages family caregivers to celebrate the passions and interests that enrich their lives. This is a time to recognize and honor family caregivers across the country.

Read [President Biden's NFCM proclamation](#)

ACL Efforts in Support of Caregivers

Families are the primary source of support for older adults and people with disabilities in the U.S.

Many caregivers work and also provide care, experiencing conflicts between competing responsibilities. Research indicates caregiving also takes a significant emotional, physical, and financial toll. With nearly half of all caregivers over age 50, many are vulnerable to a decline in their own health. Studies show that coordinated support services can reduce caregiver depression, anxiety, and stress, and enable them to provide care longer, which avoids or delays the need for costly institutional care.

ACL is a proud observer of NFCM, but works year-round through [programs and councils](#) to engage, support, and empower caregivers.

Recommended Hashtags

- #CaregiverAnd (CAN's official tag for this observance)
- #RAISEcaregiving (ACL's official tag for RAISE activities)
- #NFCMonth (Annual observance hashtag)
- #FamilyCaregiver (A larger conversation on family caregiving)

- #Caregivers (Broadest conversation around caregiving)

Relevant Websites

- [ACL's RAISE Family Caregiving Advisory Council](#)
- [ACL's Advisory Council to Support Grandparents Raising Grandchildren](#)
- [Caregiver Action Network](#)

2. Caregiver Action Network

[Caregiver Action Network Leads National Family Caregiver's Month](#)

National Family Caregivers Month – celebrated each November -- is a time to recognize and honor family caregivers across the country.

Celebrating Family Caregivers during National Family Caregivers Month enables all of us to:

- Raise awareness of family caregiver issues
- Celebrate the efforts of family caregivers
- Educate family caregivers about self-identification
- Increase support for family caregivers
- Reduce feelings of isolation

Caregiver Action Network is the organization that chooses how to celebrate National Family Caregivers Month annually and spearheads the celebration of NFC Month nationally. Each year, Caregiver Action Network makes materials available for general use, including the theme, a social media kit, etc. and coordinates with the [Administration for Community Living](#) and organizations across the field.

Caregiver Action Network (the National Family Caregivers Association) began promoting national recognition of family caregivers in 1994. President Clinton signed the first NFC Month Presidential Proclamation in 1997 and every president since has followed suit by issuing an annual proclamation recognizing and honoring family caregivers each November.

When is National Family Caregivers Month this year?

In 2023, National Family Caregivers Month will begin on Wednesday, November 1, and run through Thursday, November 30.

What is the theme for National Family Caregivers Month 2023?

This year's theme is #CaregiversConnect.

3. AARP

October 25, 2023

[The AARP Massachusetts Caregiving Resource Page](#)

By Adrian Ramos, Ted Carey

November Caregiving Education Event Series:

November is National Caregiving Month and to celebrate, AARP Massachusetts is hosting a free, virtual event series built to benefit Massachusetts caregivers through education and the opportunity to network with other caregivers. Look below and sign up/register for any and all sessions that interest you. **Every Thursday in November.**

- [Medication Literacy: Making Informed Medication and Health Decisions Thursday, November 2 7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.](#)

Insufficient medication literacy - the ability to obtain, process and use information about medicines - may be one reason that some older adults struggle with taking their drugs. Taking the right medicine in the right way and at the right time can be challenging, as is managing multiple drugs for yourself or a loved one. This discussion will explore what medication literacy

	<p>is, how different levels of literacy can impact the ability to make sound medication decisions, and ways to improve your medication literacy. Register Here.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <p>The 6 Pillars of Brain Health Thursday, November 9 12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.</p> <p>It’s never too late to focus on your brain health. In this interactive session you will learn about the six pillars of brain health, activities that support brain health and you will hopefully leave inspired by others and their suggestions. This session is a good overview for anyone interested in learning more about brain health and will provide you with information on the latest research in brain health, lifestyle suggestion and resources to learn more Register here.</p> <p>Essentials of Caregiving Thursday, November 9 7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.</p> <p>No matter where you are in the journey of caregiving – just beginning to anticipate a need, helping to coordinate a big move, or taking care of someone full-time – having a good framework to help guide you and your loved one as you make decisions will make the process easier. During this session, we will share a framework to help you navigate the caregiving journey successfully. Topics to be covered include assembling a care team, creating a caregiving plan, and strategizing on ways to prioritize self-care, too. Register here.</p> <p>Making Cents of Caregiving Costs Thursday, November 16, 2023 7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.</p> <p>In this informative session, you’ll be introduced to essential information caregivers need to know to manage the costs and complexities of caregiving more easily - creating a health care plan, choosing a power of attorney and budgeting for housing and transportation costs, for example. AARP’s Financial Workbook for Family Caregivers will be reviewed, and we’ll explore how to incorporate the financial tips into your caregiving. Additional resources will be provided. Register Here.</p> <p>Downsizing and Decluttering Thursday, November 30 7:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.</p> <p>Gain some tactics that can help make your downsizing or decluttering project less daunting. Having too much stuff can impede people from relocating or even getting health care into their homes. This engaging presentation will explore why stuff is so important to some people and will share practical, easy-to-follow tips on how to go about downsizing and decluttering. Learn how to get started! Bring your questions, as there will be time for Q&A. Register Here.</p> <p>In case you missed it above, resource guides are available for Massachusetts Caregivers. Click here to learn more.</p>
<p>Dignity Alliance Study Sessions <i>Live one-hour sessions with key individuals or specific</i></p>	<p><i>ReFraming Aging</i> Wednesday, November 8, 2023, 10:00 a.m. Presenter: Melissa Donegan, LSW, Director, Healthy Living Center of Excellence, AgeSpan</p>

<p>topics. Open to all via Zoom. Sessions will be recorded and posted on DignityMA website.</p>	<p>Join Zoom Meeting https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85666698185?pwd=QUp0RHR3OENJQTZNS1RSeVlxa01mZz09 Meeting ID: 856 6669 8185 Passcode: 394342 One tap mobile: +13052241968,,85666698185#,,,,*394342# US Telephone: +1 305 224 1968 US</p>
<p>Guide to news items in this week's Dignity Digest</p>	<p>Nursing Homes Nursing home rating system criticized over reliability, accuracy (Tribune-Review, October 29, 2023) House, Senate Health Care Priority Bills on The Move (State House News, October 26, 2023) Rise in nursing home costs 'drastically' affects middle class: analysis (McKnight's Senior Living, October 25, 2023)</p> <p>Minimum Staffing Standards for Long-Term Care A Guide to Submitting Comments on CMS's Proposed Nursing Home Staffing Standards; Webinar Materials Available (Consumer Voice, October 24, 2023)</p> <p>Public Policy How Do We Fix the Scandal That Is American Health Care? (New York Times (free access)) Rep Wants to Consider Breaking Up Health and Human Services (State House News, October 25, 2023)</p> <p>Disability Topics People with disabilities thrive in community-based settings (*Boston Globe, October 30, 2023) Lawmakers grill Social Security leader over disability system's failures (*Boston Globe, October 27, 2023) AG Campbell Announces More Than \$2.5 Million In Fraud Settlements with Two Autism Services Providers (Office of the Attorney General, October 27, 2023)</p> <p>Aging Topics Older Americans Are Winning the Economic War of the Generations (New York Times (free access), October 27, 2023) Older Americans are dominating like never before, but what comes next? (Washington Post (free access), October 24, 2023)</p> <p>Health Topics For Parkinson's disease, advances spurred by Apple Watch offer a glimmer of hope (STAT News, October 24, 2023)</p> <p>Heat Emergency / Disaster Preparation / Climate Change Heat Waves Are Killing Older Women. Are They Also Violating Their Rights? (New York Times (free access), August 7, 2023)</p> <p>Ageism Workforce equity: Employers stuck in 'time warp' about older workers (HRDive, October 20, 2023)</p> <p>Health Equity CDC recommends rationing of RSV shot due to shortages, (STAT News+, October 24, 2023) Health Affairs Briefing: Tackling Structural Racism in Health (Health Affairs (recorded virtual forum), October 3, 2023)</p>

	<p>Covid / Long Covid From a Grassroots Survey to Long Covid Treatment Trials (Undark, October 23, 2023)</p> <p>Caregiving "Could Social Security Child Benefits Help Grandparent Caregivers?" (The Center for Retirement Research at Boston College, October 24, 2023)</p> <p>From Around the Country Advocates warn of slower sales as nursing home ownership law begins (McKnight's Long-Term Care News, October 25, 2023)</p>
<p>Webinars and Other Online Sessions</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gray Panthers of New York City Tuesday, October 31, 2023, 2:00 p.m. <i>COVID Put LTC on the Front Page: Keep It There</i> Panel: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rosemary Armao, SUNY at Albany • Meg LaPorte, Art Against Ageism • John Leland, The New York Times • Ron Roel, Podcaster, 45 Forward Register Here 2. The National Association of Health Care Assistants Wednesday, November 1, 2023, 2:00 p.m. <i>Anything is Possible! Examining Potential Career Paths for CNAs</i> Join on Nov. 1 for the next NAHCA webinar, "Anything is Possible! Examining Potential Career Paths for CNAs," as Sherry Perry, CNA, chair of the NAHCA Board of Directors, and Cindy Frakes, CEO of the National Institute of CNA Excellence (NICE) examine the many opportunities for CNAs to expand their careers, including opportunities to "grow where they are planted" and to move to different care settings. REGISTER HERE 3. Boston University Alumni Association Wednesday, November 8, 2023, 12 to 1 p.m. <i>Finding Purpose in Retirement Part 1</i> Join Boston University Alumni Relations, the new Society of Terrier Alumni Retirees (STAR) network, and emeritus professor, clinical psychologist & retirement expert Jill Steinberg, Ph.D. (CAS'72), for Finding Purpose in Retirement: From Retiring to Rewiring, an evidence-based webinar to help BU alumni develop meaningful and sustainable plans to get the most out of your retirement years. Speakers Jill Steinberg, Ph.D. (CAS'72) Emeritus Professor at San Jose State University, Licensed Clinical Psychologist, Salzburg Fellow, Author, and Founder of MyRetirementWorks.com. Russell Harleston (Questrom'80) Russell retired in 2016 after 30 years of Human Resources Management experience with leading grocery retailer Wegmans, and America's largest glass manufacturer for the Food Service Industry, Libbey Inc. Gary Karelis (Questrom'70) Gary is the former owner of a plastics manufacturing company in MA, and for the bulk of his career, Gary was, (and still is) a real estate owner/investor in MA. He is semi-retired and gradually heading towards full retirement.

	<p>Linda Keene (Questrom'73) Linda is a self-taught fiber artist in Charlotte, NC. Art has become her primary occupation in retirement, following successful careers as a corporate marketing executive and non-profit CEO.</p> <p>Barry Levine (CAS'85) Barry retired in 2021 from a four-decade financial services technology career in New York City and Boston.</p> <p>Denise Schier (ENG'81) Denise retired in 2016 following a 35-year career in global engineering and business management within General Electric and Ametek Inc</p> <p>REGISTER TODAY</p> <p>4. Bipartisan Policy Center Tuesday, November 14, 2023, 11:00 a.m. <i>HEALTHY EATING RX: IMPROVING NUTRITION THROUGH HEALTH CARE</i> Diet-related diseases continue to be the leading cause of death in the U.S. Interventions that treat food as a form of treatment and provide comprehensive nutritional education have the potential to improve health outcomes and reduce substantial expenses associated with health care. Food is Medicine integrates food-based programs and interventions at multiple levels of health care such as produce prescriptions, medically tailored groceries, and medically tailored meals. Join BPC for a healthy meal food demonstration from Food and Friends, followed by a discussion on policies that address increasing nutrition education and access to Food is Medicine interventions for those with diet-related diseases. SPEAKERS Introduction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bill Hoagland Senior Vice President, BPC <p>Keynote remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bill Frist, MD Former Majority Leader, U.S. Senate; Senior Fellow, BPC • Dan Glickman Former Secretary of Agriculture, Senior Fellow, BPC • Donna E. Shalala Former Secretary of HHS • Ann Veneman Former Secretary of Agriculture, Senior Fellow, BPC <p>Panelists</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kofi Essel, MD FIM Director, Elevance Health • Lauri Wright, Ph.D. President, Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (AND) <p>Additional participants to be announced. Register</p> <p>5. Boston University Alumni Association Wednesday, November 15, 2023, 12 to 1 p.m. <i>Finding Purpose in Retirement Part 2</i> Finding Purpose in Retirement: From Retiring to Rewiring Part 2, where our Society of Terrier Alumni Retirees (STAR) alumni panel will join Jill to discuss how they found purpose and share tips they used to pursue their passion in retirement. REGISTER TODAY</p>
Previously posted webinars and online sessions	Previously posted webinars and online sessions can be viewed at: https://dignityalliancema.org/webinars-and-online-sessions/
Nursing Homes	6. Tribune-Review October 29, 2023

[Nursing home rating system criticized over reliability, accuracy](#)

By Brian C. Rittmeyer and Julia Maruca

Tools designed to help families researching a nursing home are obscure and often criticized by industry experts over their reliability and accuracy.

The [Care Compare website](#) maintained by the federal Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services houses detailed data about nursing homes, provides quality-of-care ratings and flags homes for incidents of abuse. . .

But for a layperson not familiar with the rating or flagging systems, the Care Compare site can be confusing, said Robert Daley, a partner with the Pittsburgh firm of Robert Peirce & Associates. He or she has little chance of determining why a facility is flagged. . .

The site doesn't clearly identify why the facility was flagged, what type of abuse is alleged or when it occurred, Daley said. Consumers should not be forced to dig into pages of inspection reports to gain insight into what went wrong at the facility, he said. . .

"The vast majority of caretakers in facilities are hardworking, good people trying to do the best they can," he said. "If you put them under a lie detector, 90% to 95% of them are going to tell you there's not enough people there to do the job."

7. State House News

October 26, 2023

[House, Senate Health Care Priority Bills on The Move](#)

At the start of the 2023-2024 term, Mariano [singled out reforms to improve the long-term care sector](#) as an early priority.

The Health Care Financing Committee moved Thursday to advance an omnibus long-term care reform bill (H 3929) that would implement new monitoring and enforcement tools at facilities, offer tuition reimbursement, career ladders and leadership trainings to attract more workers to the sector, and mandate infection management protocols to avoid crises like those that unfolded during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The measure won support in June from the Elder Affairs Committee.

Mariano said Thursday that the bill should emerge in the House for a vote this fall.

"Ensuring that residents of nursing homes in Massachusetts are provided with dignified, high-quality care is critically important, and has long been a priority of the House," Mariano said. "Over the next few weeks, the House intends to vote on legislation that seeks to enhance oversight and bring greater accountability to the long-term care industry, as well as improve direct care staff recruitment and retention."

8. McKnight's Senior Living

October 25, 2023

[Rise in nursing home costs 'drastically' affects middle class: analysis](#)

By Kathleen Steele Gaivin

Increasing nursing home costs "drastically affect" members of the middle class, who may not qualify for Medicaid but can't afford the specialized geriatric services that Medicare won't pay for, according to Martha Sandoval, writing about an [Incredible Health analysis](#) of [KFF data](#). The four states with the most affected residents are in the Upper Midwest, according to the data.

	<p>Overall, one-fourth of nursing home residents use personal savings or long-term care insurance benefits to cover their care, whereas two-thirds rely on Medicaid as their primary payer and 13% rely on Medicare, according to KFF data. The median cost of a semi-private room at a nursing home is approximately \$7,908 per month or \$94,900 annually, Sandoval wrote. That’s 2.9% higher than the median cost five years ago, she added.</p> <p>In more than 20 states, mostly in the central US and the West and Northeast, 22% to 37% of nursing home residents pay privately for nursing care, according to the analysis. . .</p> <p>Private-payer healthcare services price growth hit a record high this spring, with the cost of nursing home care increasing at the fastest rate, 7%, compared with other healthcare categories, according to a Health Sector Economic Indicators brief from Altarum.</p> <p>9. KFF State Health Facts 2023 Distribution of Certified Nursing Facility Residents by Primary Payer Source Available for years 2015 through 2023 Sorted by state and payor source (Medicare, Medicaid, Private, other)</p>
<p>Minimum Staffing Standards for Long-Term Care</p>	<p>10. Consumer Voice October 24, 2023 A Guide to Submitting Comments on CMS's Proposed Nursing Home Staffing Standards; Webinar Materials Available</p> <p>On September 6, 2023, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) released the long-awaited Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) that proposed a minimum staffing standard in nursing homes. While Consumer Voice supports a minimum staffing standard, the proposed staffing standard does not go far enough to protect nursing home residents. The NPRM is now in the 60-day comment period, and comments are due on November 6, 2023. It will be critical that CMS hears from you that this rule needs to be stronger. Materials are available from last week's webinar, A Guide to Submitting Comments on CMS's Proposed Nursing Home Staffing Standards. This webinar provided guidance on how to comment on critical provisions of the NPRM, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need for a stronger minimum staffing standard. • Reducing the timeframes for implementation of the rule. • CMS’s proposal to allow certain nursing homes exemptions from the standard. • Support for the 24/7 RN requirement. • Facility assessments. • Medicaid Transparency. <p>In the webinar, Consumer Voice also provided step-by-step instructions on how to submit your comments to CMS. To submit simple comments and use Consumer Voice's suggested talking points, follow these instructions.</p> <p>Template Comment Letter for Organizations</p> <p>Consumer Voice has worked with other consumer groups and unions, including Justice in Aging, the Center for Medicare Advocacy, the AFL-CIO, the Service Employees International Union, the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare, California Advocates for Nursing Home Reform, Michigan Elder Justice, the Long-Term Care Community Coalition and others, to develop a template letter for advocates to use to suggest improvements in CMS's</p>

	<p>proposed nursing home staffing rule and to show support for finalizing it. We know that the nursing home industry is pouring millions of dollars into an effort to derail the NPRM. We need to counter that! The template may be adapted to reflect your organization’s priorities and/or the experience of your members/constituents. Feel free to circulate this template among member and partner organizations.</p> <p>Download the template language and add your organizational or personal perspective. Visit our website for specific instructions on how to submit this letter. Comments are due by November 6, 2023.</p>
Public Policy	<p>11. New York Times (free access) How Do We Fix the Scandal That Is American Health Care? By Nicholas Kristof The point is that America’s health dysfunction is rooted in a broader national dysfunction, including deep intergenerational poverty and despair. The medical system can efficiently amputate a foot, but an improvement in self-care of diabetes sometimes requires an injection of hope and improvements in education, job training, earnings, and opportunity. This is important because in America our problem is not just that people die in their 70s rather than their 80s. Dr. Steven H. Woolf of the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine has found that because of guns, suicides and accidental deaths, child mortality in the United States is rising rather than falling — in a way that he doesn’t believe has any precedent in the past 100 years.</p> <p>12. State House News October 25, 2023 Rep Wants to Consider Breaking Up Health and Human Services By Alison Kuznitz After witnessing devastating COVID-19 outbreaks at veterans' homes and nursing facilities, a North Adams Democrat is advocating for a potential major restructuring of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS), a sprawling secretariat that accounts for almost 60 percent of the state's budget. The proposal from Rep. John Barrett (H 3669) would create a commission to examine the "effectiveness of the organizational structure" of EOHHS, which houses MassHealth and 11 agencies, including the Department of Public Health, the Department of Mental Health, and the Department of Children and Families. It is the largest secretariat under the executive branch and about one in three residents are served by an EOHHS agency or program, the office estimates.</p>
Alzheimer’s / Dementia	<p>13. STAT News October 24, 2023 Do dementia villages actually work? We just don’t know By Kristina Carvalho Recently, dementia villages have gained popularity in Europe and Australia as an all-in-one solution to caring for and improving the lives of those with Alzheimer’s disease and dementia. The New York Times has reported that it looks like the “future of home care.” Dementia villages are small-scale communities that offer shared housing, minor medical care, and psychosocial support in a neighborhood setting. Originating in Weesp, Netherlands, in 2009 in a village known as the Hogeweyk, the concept created a paradigm shift in dementia care, focusing on possibilities instead of</p>

	<p>disabilities. Now present in nine other countries, this care concept prioritizes autonomy and community engagement.</p> <p>But while promising in theory, it's not clear they actually work. . .</p> <p>Another concern with implementation is access and equity, especially as new evidence emerges on dementia care disparities in marginalized communities.</p> <p>Further questions remain on whether dementia villages are accessible to individuals living in rural areas, whether there are enough publicly funded spots available (if any) to include folks with a low socioeconomic background, and whether villages are racially and ethnically diverse and inclusive of LGBTQ+ elders. . .</p> <p>Now zoning for the first residential dementia village in the U.S. has been approved in New Jersey, but it is Estimated it will cost \$12,000 per month for most residents (U.S. average monthly cost for memory care facilities is \$7,500). While 10% of these spots are reserved for Medicaid recipients, it is unclear how much care will be covered. Even for those in countries that offer generous government subsidies, families still struggle to cover their portion (averaging up to 3,500 euros per month).</p>
<p>Disability Topics</p>	<p>14. *Boston Globe October 30, 2023 People with disabilities thrive in community-based settings Letter to the Editor by Barbara Salisbury, Chief executive officer, MAB Community Services, Brookline, MA</p> <p>I was incredibly encouraged to see the Globe advocate for transitioning care for people with disabilities away from institutions and into the community ("Help people with disabilities live in the community," Editorial, Oct. 27), which offers improved quality of life and the recognition that they deserve to be full participants in society.</p> <p>The idea of how best to serve individuals with disabilities has changed significantly over the past several decades. In the past, the focus was on taking care of individuals with disabilities and doing things for them. Now, the focus is on giving individuals the tools and training they need to be independent. Community-based settings are critical to achieving this mission.</p> <p>In 1973, MAB Community Services was one of the first organizations in Massachusetts to provide services in the community so that individuals with intellectual disabilities could move out of state institutions and live in neighborhoods like anyone else. We see the differences made through this model every day through the joy and achievements of our participants. With the right supports, everyone can live with autonomy and agency.</p> <p>15. *Boston Globe October 27, 2023 Lawmakers grill Social Security leader over disability system's failures By Lisa Rein</p> <p>Lawmakers in both parties Thursday pressed a top Social Security Administration official to defend what they described as widespread failures in the disability benefits system, from chronic claims backlogs to growing customer service phone delays.</p> <p>Instead of recovering from pandemic closures and slowdowns, Social Security's drawn-out claims system has treaded water for close to two years, experts told the congressional panel. More than 1 million Americans are still waiting for initial decisions on benefits that now take an average of 220 days, agency data</p>

	<p>shows — almost double the processing time in 2019 and far above the 60 days Social Security itself defines as its minimum level of performance. . . .</p> <p>Committee members united across political divides to grill Linda Kerr-Davis, Social Security’s acting assistant deputy commissioner of operations, on a range of problems, including the agency’s reliance on an obsolete list of jobs last updated in 1977 to block claimants from benefits. Lawmakers also cited long waits for service at the agency’s toll-free number, where callers are left on hold for an average of 36 minutes this year, up from 32 minutes last year. . . .</p> <p>Lawmakers asked how the system could deny 62 percent of initial claims but approve more than half of those that are appealed and then heard by an administrative law judge. The difference, advocates said, is the often cursory look given claims by low-paid state disability examiners compared with face-to-face interactions claimants have with appeals judges, who are required to spend more time with evidence.</p> <p>16. Office of the Attorney General October 27, 2023 <u>AG Campbell Announces More Than \$2.5 Million In Fraud Settlements with Two Autism Services Providers</u> Providers Allegedly Billed MassHealth for Services Not Provided and Failed to Properly Supervise Paraprofessionals. [Applied behavioral analysis] ABA services are principally designed to treat children with autism spectrum disorder, a neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by difficulties in social interaction, impaired communication, and repetitive restrictive behaviors. One of the settlements involves Ubuntu Autism Consultants, LLC (Ubuntu), formerly of Worcester, Autism Behavioral Links, Inc., of Framingham, and Ian Gatheca, the owner of both companies. The settlement requires Ubuntu and Gatheca to pay \$1.7 million to resolve allegations that they submitted false claims to MassHealth managed care entities (MCEs) for ABA services that were not provided by individuals with the appropriate credentials for the service in question. The second settlement is with Autism Resources and Therapy Center (ARTC), of Westborough, and its owner Mary Wangari. The settlement requires ARTC and Wangari to pay \$825,000 to resolve allegations that they billed MCEs for ABA services that were either not rendered and/or not properly documented, and for failing to provide adequate supervision of ARTC’s paraprofessional staff.</p>
Aging Topics	<p>17. New York Times (free access) October 27, 2023 <u>Older Americans Are Winning the Economic War of the Generations</u> If there is a war of the generations, we older Americans are winning it. As evidence, I present two remarkable charts, which are my versions of charts made by the Center on the Economics and Demography of Aging at the University of California, Berkeley. The charts show a big increase since 1960 in the consumption of goods and services by people over 60, with the biggest increase among people 75 and older. The charts show average consumption per individual, not total consumption by the (growing) cohort of the old. It’s great that fewer old people are dying in poverty. And there’s no reason that a rich country like the United States can’t support its old people while also attending to other important priorities, such as young people.</p>

But it's also true that a lot of tax dollars are going to finance the lifestyles of some retirees who really don't need the money. Rightly or wrongly, Congress is choosing spending on the old over spending on the young. "Many people are inclined to view Social Security benefits as something they are owed since they contributed to the system," the economists Melissa Kearney and Luke Pardue write in a [new paper](#) commissioned by the Aspen Economic Strategy Group. "In contrast, children have not paid into any system and there is no similar promise — either implicit or explicit — from our federal government to provide materially for children." Spending by all levels of government, including state and local, was nearly twice as high per capita on the old as on the young in 2019, they calculate. . .

There's a common view among economists that aging increases national savings because young and middle-aged people tend to save more when they know they're likely to live longer. There's some truth to that. But extra saving by the young is more than offset by the fact that once people are old, they save less than younger people because they have fewer years to live. . .

It's natural for people to be at least a little selfish. A 90-year-old will tend to be less concerned about climate change than a 10-year-old, at least on average, Mauro Guillen, the author of the 2023 book "The Perennials: The Megatrends Creating a Postgenerational Society," told me earlier this year.

Here's why that matters for the economy: When a larger share of resources is in the hands of the elderly — those eager to spend sooner rather than later — the economy's saving rate, which provides funds for new investment, drops.

18. Washington Post (free access)

October 24, 2023

[*Older Americans are dominating like never before, but what comes next?*](#)

By Marc Fisher

Virginia Boothe, a palliative care physician, retired at 69. She loved her work helping people navigate the final chapter of life, but it was relentlessly trying, one emotionally fraught day blending into the next.

She was ready to cast off the burdens of medical bureaucracy, the endless battles with insurance companies to get her patients the treatment they needed. "I wanted to take a step back from human suffering," she said.

At home in Richmond, she had her hardwood floors refinished. She went hiking in Utah and volunteered at the SPCA, working to become a dog trainer. Still, she struggled to fill her days. Starved for mental stimulation, she missed her colleagues and patients. And with no strong pipeline of palliative specialists pumping new doctors into clinics, she felt needed.

"It's driving me nuts," she said. "I have way too much free time. And I feel the most competent and proficient that I've ever felt in my life. I really feel I'm at my peak, really able to help people."

At 70, Boothe was ready to unretire. . .

a geriatric elite also controls many other aspects of [an aging society](#), to such an extent that in some professions there are deep concerns about how those roles will be filled in decades to come. In medicine, big business, farming, construction trades, and across much of the American economy, the workforce is getting older and older. In the leadership ranks, the elderly are increasingly staying in command, well past the traditional retirement age, which can sometimes limit the positions available to younger workers from a wider variety of backgrounds.

...

	<p>Some lines of work do skew young — Silicon Valley, obviously: TikTok CEO Shou Zi Chew is 40, as is Reddit co-founder Alexis Ohanian — but most industries with the lowest average ages involve low-pay, often physically-demanding work: restaurants, fast-food outlets, animal care, parking lots. An increasing number of fields are dominated by older workers, such as farmers (median age: 56.2), school bus drivers (55.9) and building inspectors (53.2), according to Bureau of Labor Statistics data. . .</p> <p>The current Congress contains the oldest Senate ever (median: 65) and the third oldest House (median: almost 58). Thirty-three senators are 70 or older; only 9 are under 50. The median age of Americans is 38.</p> <p>In the federal judiciary, where there are neither mandatory retirement ages nor term limits, the median age of judges is now 68, the oldest ever. When the Founders decided to appoint judges for life, they did not foresee life lasting quite this long. Alexander Hamilton argued for lifetime tenure, noting “how few there are who outlive the season of intellectual vigor.” (Most states never went along with that approach; in 31 state court systems, judges face a mandatory retirement age, in most cases at 70.) . .</p> <p>Only 12 percent of adults 65 and older have some type of cognitive impairment — not much higher than the 10.8 percent of those aged 45 to 64 who are impaired, according to the American Society of Aging. The American Academy of Neurology reports that mild cognitive impairment affects only 15 percent of people ages 75 to 79. . .</p> <p>And increasingly, some older workers also feel pressure to stay on the job because the supply of younger workers is thin.</p> <p>Electricians are already weathering what industry leaders call a “silver tsunami” — a severe shortage of younger specialists to take the places of the oldest contingent of workers, who can only toil so long in a physically demanding job. “It’s an issue that frankly we’re facing across all construction trades,” said Thayer Long, executive director of Independent Electrical Contractors, an industry group that trains apprentices. “We can talk about doing a better job recruiting, but there’s just a fundamental math problem. There are just not enough people to replace retiring workers.” . . .</p> <p>Boothe, the palliative care doctor, was energized to discover that at age 70, she has more passion to serve than many people her age had in previous generations. She’s still deciding whether to dive back into her work, but she feels a pull from the shortage of doctors, as well as the push from her own quest for fulfillment.</p> <p>Similar feelings are behind the aging of the nation’s physician corps. The trend is particularly marked in certain specialties: According to American Medical Association data, 71 percent of pathologists are 55 or older, as are 65 percent of cardiovascular specialists, 62 percent of psychiatrists and 61 percent of orthopedic surgeons. (By contrast, only 9 percent of sports medicine specialists and 17 percent of pediatric internists have reached 55.)</p> <p>Evans, the Charlottesville geriatrician, who turns 60 this fall, said some specialties are not attracting nearly enough young doctors because the nature of the work has shifted in a less interesting direction. The most urgent gap is among surgeons, who are far less likely to extend their careers into their senior years because of the work’s emphasis on fine motor skills.</p>
Health Topics	<p>19. * STAT News+ October 24, 2023</p>

	<p><u>For Parkinson’s disease, advances spurred by Apple Watch offer a glimmer of hope</u></p> <p>Over the past year, the FDA has cleared three Apple Watch apps from independent developers to track symptoms associated with Parkinson’s that can help inform treatment decisions for people and their doctors.</p> <p>Early detection for Parkinson’s, like what the Apple Watch has enabled for heart conditions like atrial fibrillation, is still a distant mile marker. But experts believe technology can help address the difficulty many people face accessing specialists who can diagnose and treat the disease.</p> <p>“I still don’t think we’ve even scratched a fraction of what the potential could be,” said University of Rochester neurologist Ray Dorsey. “I think we’re going to rapidly get to a point where these tools are going to identify people who are at high risk for developing Parkinson’s disease.”</p>
<p>Heat Emergency / Disaster Preparation / Climate Change</p>	<p>20. New York Times (free access)</p> <p>August 7, 2023</p> <p><u>Heat Waves Are Killing Older Women. Are They Also Violating Their Rights?</u></p> <p>By Isabella Kwai</p> <p>A group of Swiss women over 64 has filed a lawsuit against Switzerland with Europe’s top human rights court, saying the country has violated their rights by failing to curb emissions.</p> <p>the <u>KlimaSeniorinnen Schweiz</u>, a group of about 2,400 Swiss women aged 64 and over, say they have a common fear: soaring temperatures and heat waves that are threatening them with health ailments in their final decades. . .</p> <p>A heat wave this summer that sent temperatures soaring in southern Europe has highlighted those concerns — along with a landmark lawsuit that the women filed in 2020 at Europe’s top human rights court accusing the Swiss government of violating their fundamental rights by not doing enough to protect them from the effects of climate change. . .</p> <p>Switzerland experienced its hottest year on record last year, and though it has not been battered as much as southern Europe this year, a hot spell early last month sent temperatures as high as 98 degrees Fahrenheit in some Alpine areas. The national average last month was 15.9 degrees Celsius (about 60 degrees Fahrenheit), more than 2 degrees higher than pre-1900 records.</p> <p>The case, the first of its kind to be heard at that top court, the European Court for Human Rights, is among a growing number of lawsuits around the world using human rights grounds to argue that governments are shirking their obligations, as temperatures and sea levels rise, to ensure the safety and security of citizens. . .</p> <p>One recent study found that last summer’s heat waves <u>killed more than 61,000 people</u> across Europe, most of them women over 80. In Switzerland, more than 60 percent of about 600 heat-related deaths last summer were attributed to global warming, according to a <u>study</u> from the University of Bern, with older women having the highest mortality rate. . .</p> <p>The litigants in the Swiss case include four women who said they had heart and respiratory diseases that put them at risk of death on hot days.</p> <p>The crux of the complaint is a charge that the Swiss government’s failure to reduce greenhouse gas emissions enough to prevent global warming of 2 degrees Celsius is at odds with its obligations under the European Human Rights Convention. Those include rights to life and autonomy, given that older women have been proved to be particularly vulnerable to heat-related illnesses.</p>

Ageism	<p>21. HRDive October 20, 2023 Workforce equity: Employers stuck in ‘time warp’ about older workers Companies need to address “blind spots” and ageism in their recruiting efforts, panelists said at the Center for Workforce Inclusion’s annual Equity Summit. . . As people live longer and choose to remain in the workforce longer, society needs to reevaluate its stereotypes about older workers, Elizabeth White, an author and aging solutions advocate, said Tuesday during a panel discussion at the Center for Workforce Inclusion’s annual Equity Summit. . . [Janine Vanderburg, CEO of Encore Roadmap] highlighted a recent settlement in which a tutoring provider settled with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission for \$365,000 over allegations it programmed its tutor application software to reject women 55 or older and men 60 and older.</p>
Health Equity	<p>22. STAT News October 24, 2023 CDC recommends rationing of RSV shot due to shortages By Helen Branswell The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has recommended rationing an important monoclonal antibody product to protect young infants from RSV due to strained supply of the new product, Sanofi’s Beyfortus. In a health alert issued Monday, the CDC said clinicians should prioritize available doses for babies at highest risk from respiratory syncytial virus, reserving 100-milligram doses for infants under the age of 6 months and those with underlying health conditions that put them at higher risk of experiencing severe illness if they contract RSV. . . Sanofi had previously insisted it would have enough product to meet demand for Beyfortus and has even offered providers who purchase directly from the company the opportunity to delay payment for purchases until close to the end of the RSV season. But in a statement Tuesday, the company acknowledged that “unprecedented” demand for the product had outstripped initial supplies.</p> <p>23. Health Affairs (recorded virtual forum) October 3, 2023 Health Affairs Briefing: Tackling Structural Racism in Health A virtual forum at which panels of distinguished authors and experts presented their work and engaged in discussions on topics including "Politics and the Legacy of Racism," "Use of Race and Ethnicity Data," "Documenting Racism," and "Responses to Racism."</p>
Covid / Long Covid	<p>24. Undark October 23, 2023 From a Grassroots Survey to Long Covid Treatment Trials A pharmacist polled patients on their dozens of medications and supplements. Could these efforts help fight long Covid? . . . Long Covid and ME/CFS are complex illnesses. Up to 2.5 million Americans live with ME/CFS, and more than 65 million people worldwide may have long Covid — though estimates vary and the dozens of symptoms across multiple body systems can make these conditions hard to define and diagnose. In some people, symptoms linger or intensify with time, but in others they occur weeks or months after recovery from the initial infection, which could be mild or undiagnosed.</p>

	<p>In a recent analysis of 9,764 adults enrolled in the federally funded initiative RECOVER, long Covid patients fell into four subgroups based on symptoms, many overlapping with ME/CFS and other conditions. By studying biological samples from these participants, researchers hope to identify markers that can inform future trials of potential therapeutics.</p> <p>Yet for now, despite an influx of research funding, there are no widely accepted treatments approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to ease sufferers' symptoms. In that void, desperate patients have turned to a range of proposed solutions — from microbiome treatments to vitamin supplements to experimental techniques like “blood washing” — to find relief. In this vast array of possible therapies, some are exorbitant and most are unproven.</p>
Caregiving	<p>25. The Center for Retirement Research at Boston College October 24, 2023 “Could Social Security Child Benefits Help Grandparent Caregivers?” The <i>brief's</i> key findings are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grandparents raising grandchildren are often under financial stress but – without legal custody – tend to get little formal support. • Importantly, Social Security child benefits are only available to those who are legal dependents of Social Security beneficiaries. • In contrast, the IRS does <i>not</i> require legal custody to claim a child as a dependent for tax purposes. • The analysis estimates the impact of aligning Social Security's rules with the IRS criteria on grandparent caregivers. • The results show that this change would substantially boost the incomes of half of all grandparent caregiver households. <p>This <i>brief</i> is available here.</p>
From Around the Country	<p>26. McKnight's Long-Term Care News October 25, 2023 Advocates warn of slower sales as nursing home ownership law begins By Jessica R. Towhey</p> <p>A new law intended to make nursing home ownership more transparent in Connecticut is likely to slow down mergers, although leading sector advocates remain in a wait-and-see mode.</p> <p>The new law, which took effect Oct. 1, comes amid a push by state attorneys general and federal lawmakers to increase transparency around facility ownership structures.</p> <p>In April, 18 state AGs asked the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services to move ahead with a proposal to define private equity and real estate investment trusts, which regulators said would set the stage for the disclosure of whether those types of owners or investors play a role in a specific nursing home. US Sen. Charles Grassley (R-IA) has long pushed for enhanced transparency rules for nursing homes.</p> <p>Several states have already moved to add more oversight, with some including Minnesota and California, requiring their attorneys general or health departments to give direct approval of certain deals.</p>
Dignity Alliance Massachusetts Legislative Endorsements	<p>Information about the legislative bills which have been endorsed by Dignity Alliance Massachusetts, including the text of the bills, can be viewed at: https://tinyurl.com/DignityLegislativeEndorsements Questions or comments can be directed to Legislative Work Group Chair Richard (Dick) Moore at rmooore8473@charter.net.</p>

Websites	
Previously recommended websites	The comprehensive list of recommended websites has migrated to the Dignity Alliance MA website: https://dignityalliancema.org/resources/ . Only new recommendations will be listed in <i>The Dignity Digest</i> .
Previously posted funding opportunities	For open funding opportunities previously posted in <i>The Tuesday Digest</i> please see https://dignityalliancema.org/funding-opportunities/ .
Websites of Dignity Alliance Massachusetts Members	See: https://dignityalliancema.org/about/organizations/
Nursing Home Closures	Massachusetts Department of Public Health <i>South Dennis Health Care</i> Target closure date January 30, 2024 Public Hearing Information Wednesday, November 1st, 2023, 6:00 p.m. Dial in Phone #: 888-913-9966 Participant Code: 1537749 Notice of Intent to Close (PDF) (DOCX)
Nursing homes with admission freezes	Massachusetts Department of Public Health <i>Temporary admissions freeze</i> There have been no new postings on the DPH website since May 10, 2023.
Massachusetts Department of Public Health Determination of Need Projects	Massachusetts Department of Public Health <i>Determination of Need Projects: Long Term Care</i> 2023 Navigator Homes of Martha's Vineyard, Inc. – Long Term Care Substantial Capital Expenditure Royal Wayland Nursing Home, LLC – Conservation Long Term Care Project 2022 Ascentria Care Alliance – Laurel Ridge Ascentria Care Alliance – Lutheran Housing Ascentria Care Alliance – Quaboag Berkshire Healthcare Systems, Inc. – Windsor Long Term Care Conservation Fairlawn Rehabilitation Hospital-Hospital/Clinic Substantial Capital Expenditure Long Term Centers of Lexington – Pine Knoll – Long Term Care Conservation Long Term Centers of Wrentham – Serenity Hill – Long Term Care Conservation Next Step Healthcare LLC-Conservation Long Term Care Project Royal Falmouth – Conservation Long Term Care Royal Norwell – Long Term Care Conservation Wellman Healthcare Group, Inc 2020 Advocate Healthcare, LLC Amendment Campion Health & Wellness, Inc. – LTC - Substantial Change in Service Heywood Healthcare, Inc. – Hospital/Clinic Substantial Capital Expenditure Notre Dame Health Care Center, Inc. – LTC Conservation 2020 Advocate Healthcare of East Boston, LLC. Belmont Manor Nursing Home, Inc.

List of Special Focus Facilities

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

List of Special Focus Facilities and Candidates

<https://tinyurl.com/SpecialFocusFacilityProgram>

Updated March 29, 2023

CMS has published a new list of Special Focus Facilities (SFF). SFFs are nursing homes with serious quality issues based on a calculation of deficiencies cited during inspections and the scope and severity level of those citations. CMS publicly discloses the names of the facilities chosen to participate in this program and candidate nursing homes.

To be considered for the SFF program, a facility must have a history (at least 3 years) of serious quality issues. These nursing facilities generally have more deficiencies than the average facility, and more serious problems such as harm or injury to residents. Special Focus Facilities have more frequent surveys and are subject to progressive enforcement until it either graduates from the program or is terminated from Medicare and/or Medicaid.

This is important information for consumers – particularly as they consider a nursing home.

What can advocates do with this information?

- Include the list of facilities in your area/state when providing information to consumers who are looking for a nursing home. Include an explanation of the SFF program and the candidate list.
- Post the list on your program’s/organization’s website (along with the explanation noted above).
- Encourage current residents and families to check the list to see if their facility is included.
- Urge residents and families in a candidate facility to ask the administrator what is being done to improve care.
- Suggest that resident and family councils invite the administrator to a council meeting to talk about what the facility is doing to improve care, ask for ongoing updates, and share any council concerns.
- For long-term care ombudsmen representatives: Meet with the administrator to discuss what the facility is doing to address problems and share any resources that might be helpful.

Massachusetts facilities listed (updated March 29, 2023)

Newly added to the listing

- Somerset Ridge Center, Somerset
<https://somersetridgesrehab.com/>
Nursing home inspect information:
<https://projects.propublica.org/nursing-homes/homes/h-225747>
- South Dennis Healthcare
<https://www.nextstephc.com/southdennis>
Nursing home inspect information:
<https://projects.propublica.org/nursing-homes/homes/h-225320>

Massachusetts facilities not improved

- None

Massachusetts facilities which showed improvement

- Marlborough Hills Rehabilitation and Health Care Center, Marlborough
<https://tinyurl.com/MarlboroughHills>
Nursing home inspect information:
<https://projects.propublica.org/nursing-homes/homes/h-225063>

	<p>Massachusetts facilities which have graduated from the program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Oxford Rehabilitation & Health Care Center, Haverhill https://theoxfordrehabhealth.com/ Nursing home inspect information: https://projects.propublica.org/nursing-homes/homes/h-225218 • Worcester Rehabilitation and Health Care Center, Worcester https://worcesterrehabcare.com/ Nursing home inspect information: https://projects.propublica.org/nursing-homes/homes/h-225199 <p>Massachusetts facilities that are candidates for listing (months on list)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charwell House Health and Rehabilitation, Norwood (15) https://tinyurl.com/Charwell Nursing home inspect information: https://projects.propublica.org/nursing-homes/homes/h-225208 • Glen Ridge Nursing Care Center (1) https://www.genesishcc.com/glenridge Nursing home inspect information: https://projects.propublica.org/nursing-homes/homes/h-225523 • Hathaway Manor Extended Care (1) https://hathawaymanor.org/ Nursing home inspect information: https://projects.propublica.org/nursing-homes/homes/h-225366 • Medway Country Manor Skilled Nursing and Rehabilitation, Medway (1) https://www.medwaymanor.com/ Nursing home inspect information: https://projects.propublica.org/nursing-homes/homes/h-225412 • Mill Town Health and Rehabilitation, Amesbury (14) No website Nursing home inspect information: https://projects.propublica.org/nursing-homes/homes/h-225318 • Plymouth Rehabilitation and Health Care Center (10) https://plymouthrehab.com/ Nursing home inspect information: https://projects.propublica.org/nursing-homes/homes/h-225207 • Tremont Health Care Center, Wareham (10) https://thetremontrehabcare.com/ Nursing home inspect information: https://projects.propublica.org/nursing-homes/homes/h-225488 • Vantage at Wilbraham (5) No website Nursing home inspect information: https://projects.propublica.org/nursing-homes/homes/h-225295 • Vantage at South Hadley (12) No website Nursing home inspect information: https://projects.propublica.org/nursing-homes/homes/h-225757 https://tinyurl.com/SpecialFocusFacilityProgram
<i>Nursing Home Inspect</i>	ProPublica <i>Nursing Home Inspect</i> Data updated November 2022

	<p>This app uses data from the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. Fines are listed for the past three years if a home has made partial or full payment (fines under appeal are not included). Information on deficiencies comes from a home’s last three inspection cycles, or roughly three years in total. The number of COVID-19 cases is since May 8, 2020, when homes were required to begin reporting this information to the federal government (some homes may have included data on earlier cases).</p> <p>Massachusetts listing: https://projects.propublica.org/nursing-homes/state/MA Deficiencies By Severity in Massachusetts (What do the severity ratings mean?)</p> <table border="0"> <thead> <tr> <th># reported</th> <th>Deficiency Tag</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>250</td> <td>B</td> </tr> <tr> <td>82</td> <td>C</td> </tr> <tr> <td>7,056</td> <td>D</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1,850</td> <td>E</td> </tr> <tr> <td>546</td> <td>F</td> </tr> <tr> <td>487</td> <td>G</td> </tr> <tr> <td>31</td> <td>H</td> </tr> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>I</td> </tr> <tr> <td>40</td> <td>J</td> </tr> <tr> <td>7</td> <td>K</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>L</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	# reported	Deficiency Tag	250	B	82	C	7,056	D	1,850	E	546	F	487	G	31	H	1	I	40	J	7	K	2	L
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Nursing Home Compare	<p>Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) <i>Nursing Home Compare Website</i> Beginning January 26, 2022, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) is posting new information that will help consumers have a better understanding of certain staffing information and concerns at facilities. This information will be posted for each facility and includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff turnover: The percentage of nursing staff as well as the number of administrators who have stopped working at a nursing home over the past 12-month period. • Weekend staff: The level of weekend staffing for nurses and registered nurses at a nursing home over a three-month period. <p>Posting this information was required as part of the Affordable Care Act, which was passed in 2010. In many facilities, staffing is lower on weekends, often meaning residents have to wait longer or may not receive all the care they need. High turnover means that staff are less likely to know the residents, recognize changes in condition, or implement preferred methods of providing care. All of this contributes to the quality-of-care residents receive and their quality of life. https://tinyurl.com/NursingHomeCompareWebsite</p>																								
Data on Ownership of Nursing Homes	<p>Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services <i>Data on Ownership of Nursing Homes</i> CMS has released data giving state licensing officials, state and federal law enforcement, researchers, and the public an enhanced ability to identify common owners of nursing homes across nursing home locations. This information can be linked to other data sources to identify the performance of facilities under common ownership, such as owners affiliated with multiple nursing homes with a record of poor performance. The data is available on nursing home ownership will be posted to data.cms.gov and updated monthly.</p>																								

<p>Long-Term Care Facilities Specific COVID-19 Data</p>	<p>Massachusetts Department of Public Health <i>Long-Term Care Facilities Specific COVID-19 Data</i> <i>Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) reports related to long-term care facilities in Massachusetts.</i></p> <p>Table of Contents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID-19 Daily Dashboard • COVID-19 Weekly Public Health Report • Additional COVID-19 Data • CMS COVID-19 Nursing Home Data 																																																																																											
<p>DignityMA Call Action</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The MA Senate released a report in response to COVID-19. Download the DignityMA Response to Reimagining the Future of MA. • Advocate for state bills that advance the Dignity Alliance Massachusetts' Mission and Goals – State Legislative Endorsements. • Support relevant bills in Washington – Federal Legislative Endorsements. • Join our Work Groups. • Learn to use and leverage Social Media at our workshops: Engaging Everyone: Creating Accessible, Powerful Social Media Content 																																																																																											
<p>Access to Dignity Alliance social media</p>	<p>Email: info@DignityAllianceMA.org Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/DignityAllianceMA/ Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/dignityalliance/ LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/company/dignity-alliance-massachusetts Twitter: https://twitter.com/dignity_ma?s=21 Website: www.DignityAllianceMA.org</p>																																																																																											
<p>Participation opportunities with Dignity Alliance Massachusetts</p> <p>Most workgroups meet bi-weekly via Zoom.</p> <p>Interest Groups meet periodically (monthly, bi-monthly, or quarterly).</p> <p>Please contact group lead for more information.</p>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Workgroup</th> <th>Workgroup lead</th> <th>Email</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>General Membership</td> <td>Bill Henning Paul Lanzikos</td> <td>bhenning@bostoncouncil.org paul.lanzikos@gmail.com</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Behavioral Health</td> <td>Frank Baskin</td> <td>baskinfrank19@gmail.com</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Communications</td> <td>Lachlan Forrow</td> <td>lforrow@bidmc.harvard.edu</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Facilities (Nursing homes)</td> <td>Arlene Germain</td> <td>agermain@manhr.org</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Home and Community Based Services</td> <td>Meg Coffin</td> <td>mcoffin@centerlw.org</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Legislative</td> <td>Richard Moore</td> <td>rmoore8743@charter.net</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Legal Issues</td> <td>Jeni Kaplan</td> <td>jkaplan@cpr-ma.org</td> </tr> <tr> <th>Interest Group</th> <th>Group lead</th> <th>Email</th> </tr> <tr> <td>Assisted Living and Rest Homes</td> <td>In formation</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Housing</td> <td>Bill Henning</td> <td>bhenning@bostoncouncil.org</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Veteran Services</td> <td>James Lomastro</td> <td>jimlomastro@comcast.net</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Transportation</td> <td>Frank Baskin Chris Hoeh</td> <td>baskinfrank19@gmail.com cdhoeh@gmail.com</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Covid / Long Covid</td> <td>James Lomastro</td> <td>jimlomastro@comcast.net</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Incarcerated Persons</td> <td>TBD</td> <td>info@DignityAllianceMA.org</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Workgroup	Workgroup lead	Email	General Membership	Bill Henning Paul Lanzikos	bhenning@bostoncouncil.org paul.lanzikos@gmail.com	Behavioral Health	Frank Baskin	baskinfrank19@gmail.com	Communications	Lachlan Forrow	lforrow@bidmc.harvard.edu	Facilities (Nursing homes)	Arlene Germain	agermain@manhr.org	Home and Community Based Services	Meg Coffin	mcoffin@centerlw.org	Legislative	Richard Moore	rmoore8743@charter.net	Legal Issues	Jeni Kaplan	jkaplan@cpr-ma.org	Interest Group	Group lead	Email	Assisted Living and Rest Homes	In formation		Housing	Bill Henning	bhenning@bostoncouncil.org	Veteran Services	James Lomastro	jimlomastro@comcast.net	Transportation	Frank Baskin Chris Hoeh	baskinfrank19@gmail.com cdhoeh@gmail.com	Covid / Long Covid	James Lomastro	jimlomastro@comcast.net	Incarcerated Persons	TBD	info@DignityAllianceMA.org	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Workgroup</th> <th>Workgroup lead</th> <th>Email</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>General Membership</td> <td>Bill Henning Paul Lanzikos</td> <td>bhenning@bostoncouncil.org paul.lanzikos@gmail.com</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Behavioral Health</td> <td>Frank Baskin</td> <td>baskinfrank19@gmail.com</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Communications</td> <td>Lachlan Forrow</td> <td>lforrow@bidmc.harvard.edu</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Facilities (Nursing homes)</td> <td>Arlene Germain</td> <td>agermain@manhr.org</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Home and Community Based Services</td> <td>Meg Coffin</td> <td>mcoffin@centerlw.org</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Legislative</td> <td>Richard Moore</td> <td>rmoore8743@charter.net</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Legal Issues</td> <td>Jeni Kaplan</td> <td>jkaplan@cpr-ma.org</td> </tr> <tr> <th>Interest Group</th> <th>Group lead</th> <th>Email</th> </tr> <tr> <td>Assisted Living and Rest Homes</td> <td>In formation</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Housing</td> <td>Bill Henning</td> <td>bhenning@bostoncouncil.org</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Veteran Services</td> <td>James Lomastro</td> <td>jimlomastro@comcast.net</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Transportation</td> <td>Frank Baskin Chris Hoeh</td> <td>baskinfrank19@gmail.com cdhoeh@gmail.com</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Covid / Long Covid</td> <td>James Lomastro</td> <td>jimlomastro@comcast.net</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Incarcerated Persons</td> <td>TBD</td> <td>info@DignityAllianceMA.org</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Workgroup	Workgroup lead	Email	General Membership	Bill Henning Paul Lanzikos	bhenning@bostoncouncil.org paul.lanzikos@gmail.com	Behavioral Health	Frank Baskin	baskinfrank19@gmail.com	Communications	Lachlan Forrow	lforrow@bidmc.harvard.edu	Facilities (Nursing homes)	Arlene Germain	agermain@manhr.org	Home and Community Based Services	Meg Coffin	mcoffin@centerlw.org	Legislative	Richard Moore	rmoore8743@charter.net	Legal Issues	Jeni Kaplan	jkaplan@cpr-ma.org	Interest Group	Group lead	Email	Assisted Living and Rest Homes	In formation		Housing	Bill Henning	bhenning@bostoncouncil.org	Veteran Services	James Lomastro	jimlomastro@comcast.net	Transportation	Frank Baskin Chris Hoeh	baskinfrank19@gmail.com cdhoeh@gmail.com	Covid / Long Covid	James Lomastro	jimlomastro@comcast.net	Incarcerated Persons	TBD	info@DignityAllianceMA.org
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<p>The Dignity Digest</p>	<p>For a free weekly subscription to <i>The Dignity Digest</i>: https://dignityalliancema.org/contact/sign-up-for-emails/ Editor: Paul Lanzikos Primary contributor: Sandy Novack MailChimp Specialist: Sue Rorke</p>																																																																																											

<p>Note of thanks</p>	<p>Thanks to the contributors to this issue of <i>The Dignity Digest</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dick Moore <p>Special thanks to the MetroWest Center for Independent Living for assistance with the website and MailChimp versions of <i>The Dignity Digest</i>. <i>If you have submissions for inclusion in <u>The Dignity Digest</u> or have questions or comments, please submit them to Digest@DignityAllianceMA.org.</i></p>
<p><i>Dignity Alliance Massachusetts is a broad-based coalition of organizations and individuals pursuing fundamental changes in the provision of long-term services, support, and care for older adults and persons with disabilities. Our guiding principle is the assurance of dignity for those receiving the services as well as for those providing them. The information presented in "The Dignity Digest" is obtained from publicly available sources and does not necessarily represent positions held by Dignity Alliance Massachusetts.</i></p> <p><i>Previous issues of <u>The Tuesday Digest</u> and <u>The Dignity Digest</u> are available at: https://dignityalliancema.org/dignity-digest/</i></p> <p><i>For more information about Dignity Alliance Massachusetts, please visit www.DignityAllianceMA.org.</i></p>	