



For Media Release

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Advocates Advance Proposals for a Dignity Budget

Suggestions for a Massachusetts State Budget that's Age-Friendly and Able-Friendly

BOSTON – A statewide, non-profit coalition of organization and individuals dedicate to advocating for the needs of older adults, people with disabilities, and caregivers, is proposing budget enhancements aimed at creating an “age-friendly, able-friendly Commonwealth. Dignity Alliance Massachusetts is asking the Healey-Driscoll Administration to consider to budget funding increase, new funding, and directive language in the budget that will be submitted to the Legislature next January.

“The Dignity Budget,” as it’s been dubbed, contains proposals that cover all six Constitutional Offices, most of the Cabinet-level agencies, and even some quasi-independent agencies. The proposals are grouped under three overarching priorities:

- Dignity for Long-Term Care Residents in Nursing Homes – including increase and enforce nursing home staffing, increase inspection and oversight by Department of Public Health, and increasing the resident Personal Needs Allowance that has been stagnant for decades.
- Dignity for All Older Adults and People with Disabilities in the Community – including increasing support for accessible, affordable housing grants and alternative housing vouchers, increasing support for independent living centers, and increasing funding for elder mental health outreach teams.
- Dignity for Caregivers of Older Adults and People with Disabilities – including enhanced support for both family and career caregivers, increasing pay and benefits for nursing home, home care, and community programs staff, freezing nursing home admissions when there is continuing non-compliance with staffing ratios.

Each priority includes action steps in the form of funding and budget directives to create a Fiscal '25 budget plan that would achieve progress in state government efforts to support the growing population of older adults, those whose abilities are challenged, those who care for both groups.

Paul Lanzikos, Coordinator of Dignity Alliance, and a former Secretary of Elder Affairs in the Dukakis Administration, explained that the advocates see the “Dignity Budget” as “aspirational in that it suggests goals for the Commonwealth.” However, he and his fellow advocates hope that progress on, at least, some of the priorities can be realized in the coming year whether as submitted in the Governor’s Budget, or offered by legislators as amendments during the budget process.

The “Dignity Budget” represents a collaborative effort by individuals and groups participating in the Alliance, and led by Lanzikos of Beverly and former Senator Richard T. Moore of Uxbridge. Dignity Alliance Massachusetts was formed during the early stages of the COVID-19 Pandemic and is currently in its third year advocating through legislation, litigation, and education to improve the lives of some of the most vulnerable residents of Massachusetts.

Other groups and individuals endorsing the Dignity Budget proposals include: Boston Center for Independent Living, Kathryn Burns, Greater Lynn Senior Services, Lynn; Center for Living & Working, Worcester; COP Amputee Association-COPAA, Wenham; Disability Policy Consortium, Boston; Judith Fonsh, MSW, Greenfield; John Ford, Esq., Quincy; Wynn Gerhard, Mass Guardianship Policy Institute; Arlene Germain, Medford, co-founder Dignity Alliance Massachusetts and MA Advocates for Nursing Home Reform; Paul J. Lanzikos, Beverly, former Secretary, Executive Office of Elder Affairs, James A. Lomastro PhD, Conway, Former Senate President Pro Tem Richard Moore, Uxbridge; Sandy Novack, MBA, MSW, Brookline; Susan Rorke, Medway; Norma Swenson, Newton, Co-Founder, Our Bodies, Ourselves; and Dorothy E. Weitzman, Newton

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