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Dignity Alliance Massachusetts to Honor Legislative Champions

State House ceremony on October 1, 2024

BOSTON – Legislators and staff will be honored by Dignity Alliance Massachusetts (DignityMA) for their leadership on issues of interest and concern to older adults, people with disabilities, and their caregivers during the 2023-2024 legislation session. The awards will be presented on Tuesday, October 1, 2024 in Room 428 at the State House, October 1, beginning at 10:45am. The event can be viewed virtually via <https://tinyurl.com/DignityMAChampions>

Senator Joan Lovely (D-Salem) and Representative Thomas Stanley (D-Waltham) will be recognized for their effective advocacy during the 2023-2024 legislative session. Sen. Lovely, the Assistant Senate Majority Leader, is being recognized for her consistent support of DignityMA endorsed legislation and her advocacy to increase the personal needs allowance for nursing home residents. Rep. Stanley, who is House Chair of the Joint Committee on Elder Affairs, also has a long record of support for legislation to aid older adults and persons with disabilities and was a lead sponsor of [Chapter 197 of the Acts of 2024](#), *An Act relative to Quality and Oversight of Long-Term Care and Assisted Living*, the comprehensive long-term care reform bill recently signed into law by Governor Maura Healey. Joining in presenting the awards will be Dignity's 2022 honorees, Senator Patricia Jehlen (D-Somerville), who was the lead Senate sponsor of the long-term care bill, and Rep. Ruth Balsler (D-Newton) a House Division Chair who formerly chaired the Elder Affairs committee.

Four other lawmakers who chose not to seek re-election, will be recognized for their years of service in support of legislation and issues advocated by DignityMA. Those receiving awards are **Reps. Balsler, Denise Garlick (D-Dedham), Kay Khan (D-Newton), and Sen. Marc Pacheco (D-Taunton).**

DignityMA will also recognize the importance of legislative staff in advancing issues of interest to their constituents. “During my years in both the House and Senate, I learned how staff can be a major influence in getting bills considered and approved,” said former Sen. Richard T. Moore, who is a co-founder and Legislative Chair of DignityMA. “While many staffers, as well as those working for the legislative clerks, counsels and other offices, are deserving for recognition for their, often unheralded efforts, we chose a representative sample who are especially deserving,” Moore explained.

Legislative staffers being recognized are **Brian Rossman, Victoria Halal, Mary Padien and Gabe Adams-Keane from the Senate. House staff receiving recognition are Whitney Ferguson, Mark Phillips, and Dmitriy Gridnev.**

Priorities of DignityMA for the year ahead will also be profiled. These include: equalizing nursing home residents rights, increasing nursing home residents’ personal needs allowance (PNA), and supporting efforts to implement the [Marsters Settlement](#), a major federal court agreement that promises to help at least 2400 nursing home residents return to their communities to live independently with supportive services, according to Paul Lanzikos, Dignity co-founder and State Coordinator. Lanzikos is a former Secretary of Elder Affairs.

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