



The Dignity Digest

Issue # 233

April 22, 2025

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

	*May require registration before accessing the article.
DignityMA Zoom Sessions	Dignity Alliance Massachusetts participants meet via Zoom every other Tuesday at 2:00 p.m. Sessions are open to all. To receive session notices with agenda and Zoom links, please send a request via info@DignityAllianceMA.org .
Spotlight	<p>What DignityMA Means to Me <i>Five years ago, in the earliest days of the Covid pandemic, Dignity Alliance Massachusetts was established as a volunteer-driven to transform the provision of long-term services and care in the Commonwealth. Since that time, hundreds of individuals and organizations have used their collective voices and efforts to make a real difference through legislation, regulatory reform, public policy, and information sharing.</i> <i>On behalf of Massachusetts older adults, persons with disabilities, and caregivers, I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to all involved. Together, we look forward to even more and greater achievements in the year ahead.</i></p> <p><i>We asked DignityMA participants about their involvement with DignityMA: what motivates their participation and what they would like to see accomplished in the year ahead. We are sharing three responses. If you would like to add your thoughts, you can via https://forms.gle/n3rh9kdw4wx5bfXd6.</i></p> <p>Judi Fonsh, MSW, Leverett, MA What motivates me to be involved with DignityMA? Collaboration with folks who really care about the needs of older adults and those who live with disabilities and who demonstrate it by doing the work to show others what needs to be done to help.</p> <p>Here's what I would like to see accomplished in the year ahead. Older adults and those who are living with disabilities should be prioritized as important to those running the Commonwealth.</p> <p>What three words / phrases describe DignityMA for you? Collaboration, Dignity, Advocacy</p> <p>Former State Senator Richard T. Moore, Uxbridge, MA What motivates me to be involved with DignityMA? My initial motivation was the tragedy experienced by nursing home residents during COVID and the failure of nursing homes and government to keep those residents safe. I continue to be dismayed by the nursing home industry and the government - state and local - with the continued need to transform long-term care and expand opportunities for older adults and people with disabilities to remain in their homes and communities throughout their lives.</p>

Here's what I would like to see accomplished in the year ahead.

The current federal administration in Washington appears to be headed to making America more unhealthy by failing to improve on agencies and funding to support the growing population of resident age 60+. At the very least I want to see state government improve their oversight of long-term care - implement Marsters v. Healey, stand behind single, or not more than two residents per room in nursing homes, uphold and strengthen staffing regulations, implement C.197 of the Acts of 2024 and fight against cuts in Medicaid and Social Security.

What three words / phrases describe DignityMA for you?

Independent honest broker (for aging, those with disabilities, and caregivers)

Sandy Novack, MBA, LICSW, ACSW, CSW-G, Brookline, MA

What motivates me to be involved:

Over decades, I wrangled with some of the same types of issues that Dignity Alliance now confronts. The difference is that often, before the Dignity Alliance was formed, I was working on issues alone or with a small group of people. Dignity Alliance, however, has participants with special interests or expertise on a wide range of matters, so issues can be moved forward in a timely and strategic way. I feel I owe it to the people swept up in lower quality facilities, left to manage on their own in the community, or otherwise not in a good situation, to finally achieve changes in some of the systems that disserved them. It is a very good feeling to work toward raising up the more vulnerable.

For the year ahead:

- a. I want to visit some facilities with a surveyor, and document ventilation and heat stress (no air conditioning, no windows that open, or not enough heat in the winter), and follow it through to being corrected.
- b. I would like to see health insurers', hospitals', etc. plans of action and programs to help with climate change, heat stress, food insecurity. If they don't have such policies and programs, why not? If they do have it, how many people do they serve?
- c. I would like to work to change the mindset of hospital discharge planners to prioritize discharging patients back home with services, rather than the automatic attempt to discharge anyone with disabilities and older adults to a nursing home. This means we must ensure support services will be available in the home.
- d. I would like to see the growth of a hospital to home model, complete with a return to doctors making home visits like they sometimes used to do for patients with certain needs, and greater use of telehealth.
- e. I would like to consider combining the Disabled Persons Protection Commission with Adult Protective Services, and work to not turn anyone down for assistance if they have disabilities or are an older adult.

	<p>f. I want to see a plaque in the State House, acknowledging the illness, suffering, and deaths of so many of the most vulnerable in our Commonwealth during the coronavirus pandemic. And every year, the Great Hall should showcase educational material on the true story of why the vulnerable were left to sicken or die. This includes residents and staff in nursing homes, group homes, assisted living, rest homes, elderly housing, older adults and people with disabilities in apartments, hospital staff, essential workers like grocery store employees, caregivers, home health and home care workers, etc.</p> <p>g. I would like to see actual housing units for people with disabilities and older adults, rather than just talk about creating it in the future, I want to see it opening now, from vacated strip malls, vacated churches and office towers, etc. Accessible units, and units at all price points. I am tired of hearing maybe soon, maybe this and maybe that. Hotels have closed, office towers have closed, malls have closed-- use political muscle and get buildings renovated now to be accessible and affordable, also climate hardy with air conditioning, hurricane-proof windows, etc.</p> <p>h. I can't accept that a body of legislators cannot give a substantial raise to the PNA, when they themselves get raises most years. Maybe we should propose to roll back state salaries to the year that the PNA stopped increasing, and then let's see how they manage on 20 year old income in a 2025 world. In fact, let's have a campaign to roll back doctors' salaries, nursing home administrators' salaries, governors' salaries, etc. everyone's salaries to what it was twenty-odd years ago and see who can afford today's rent/mortgage, clothes, etc. , and let's see how quickly they then push to raise the PNA.</p> <p>Words/phrases to describe DignityMA: A smorgasbord of work groups and advocacy events, enough to fill the problem-solving and emotional appetite of the most hungry for change, while surrounded by creative, and forward-thinking minds. A place at the table for everyone--including professional, older adult, person with disabilities, patient, nursing home resident, caregiver, family member. Always collegial, always something new to learn or share with others. In turbulent times in the world, like we have now, it is THE place to be each week to pull together and focus on the possible.</p>
Quotes	<p><i>I often ask myself – who could have predicted that when I was on life support and not expected to survive, I would one day thrive and live a full life thanks to my mind, my consciousness, my cognitive strengths and abilities that I benefit from every day?</i></p>

Penny Shaw, state and national nursing home advocate, ***How My Mind Helps Me Thrive***, [Disability Issues](#), Vol. 45, No. 2, Spring 2025

The world can feel uncertain, and challenges come in many forms. While self-care won't solve every problem, it can help you build strength and resilience to better navigate whatever comes your way. Taking time for yourself and for others. It's a powerful way to stay hopeful and engaged.

Sandy Alissa Novack, ***Self-care During Challenging Times***, [Disability Issues](#), Vol. 45, No. 2, Spring 2025

Federal prosecutors have said Skyline's IRS debt led to the collapse of the firm, which included 95 facilities in 11 states, spread from Massachusetts to Arkansas and South Dakota. Overall, some 15,000 employees and 7,000 patients were involved. State officials took over dozens of facilities through the [receivership process](#) when concerns about getting food and medicine to residents became evident.

[Skyline's Schwartz gets 3 years in prison for scheme that collapsed dozens of nursing homes](#), McKnights Long Term Care News, April 10, 2025

"By creating more opportunities for equitable access to high-demand fields, we can grow the health care workforce at a rate that meets the needs of Massachusetts residents."

Education Secretary Dr. Patrick Tutwiler, [Healey-Driscoll Administration Awards Community Colleges \\$9.7 Million to Strengthen the Massachusetts Health Care Workforce](#), Office of Governor Maura Healey and Lt. Governor Kim Driscoll, April 17, 2025

"[Harriet Chandler] is among the state's most distinguished legislators as well as having been the first female president in the history of the Massachusetts Senate."

Museum of Worcester Executive Director Bill Wallace, ***[Former State Senator Harriet] Chandler to receive prestigious 2025 Harvey Ball Smile Award***, The Worcester Guardian, April 18, 2025

"We feel that [the proposed FY 2026 state budget] provides the services that are necessary in these times, which is unprecedented in terms of the chaos that we're dealing with from not having a reliable partner on the federal side of things."

House Ways and Means Chair Aaron Michlewitz, [Spend Now, React Later](#), *State House News, April 18, 2025


"[Insulin] keeps me alive, but the drug companies are profiting from my condition. And there's nothing I can do about it."


Carolyn McGrath, a community college professor, [said that rising drug prices are hammering patients, employers, and insurers. Is there any end in sight?](#), *Boston Globe, April 17, 2025

About 50,000 of Blue Cross's 3 million members were taking GLP-1s as of Jan. 1, with 80 percent of those members taking it for weight loss. . . While there is variation, the average monthly retail price of the class of obesity medications is about \$1,200 without insurance. . . Costs for five of the GLP-1 drugs — Ozempic, Mounjaro, Wegovy, Zepbound, and Saxenda — topped \$300 million for Boston-based Blue Cross last year, more than double what it spent in 2023. The five medicines accounted for nearly 20 percent of all the insurer's drug spending in 2024.

[Blue Cross Blue Shield will stop covering popular weight-loss drugs amid surging costs](#), *Boston Globe, April 17, 2025

Lauren Peters, executive director of the Center for Health Information and Analysis, expressed alarm about the soaring spending. With the 8.6 percent increase, health care spending in Massachusetts totaled \$11,153 per resident. . . Spending on prescription drugs represented the largest share of overall health care expenditures and increased by 11.6 percent over 2022, to \$15.2 billion, the report stated. The next-largest category was outpatient care at hospitals, which totaled \$14 billion, an increase of 8.3 percent over the previous year.

	<p><u>Health care spending in Massachusetts soared in 2023. Here's what's to blame</u>, *Boston Globe, March 25, 2025</p> <p><i>“We oftentimes frame this [debate over Medicaid funding cuts] as ‘People will lose their health insurance,’ and that is true,” said [Dr. Adam Brown, a Washington, D.C.-based emergency physician and founder of a health care strategy firm]. But “the constituencies affected are not just the people who have Medicaid.”</i></p> <p><i>Less funding for Medicaid, or an increase in the number of people without insurance, would harm people with any kind of insurance, he said. It could lead to longer wait times at hospitals, fewer services offered and, in some cases, hospital closures.</i></p> <p><u>1 in 5 Americans are on Medicaid. Some enrollees have no idea</u>, PBS News, April 13, 2025</p> <p><i>“I feel as young as when I was 50, and I’d like to be doing this well into my 80’s. That’s my personal goal.” Rice can’t explain her gift but is grateful she has it. “Maybe I’m just lucky and blessed.”</i></p> <p>Jeannie Rice, <u>At 77, she’s as fit as a 25-year-old. What her body tells us about aging</u>. *Washington Post, April 20, 2025</p>
<p>Commentary by DignityMA participants</p> <p>o</p>  <p>Jim Lomastro is a member of DignityMA’s Coordinating Committee. He is the Chair of DignityMA’s Facilities Work Group and Veteran Services Workgroup.</p>	<p>Steward and Nursing Homes: The Grift that Keeps Taking April 21, 2025 By James Lomastro, PhD</p> <p>The Steward Health Care bankruptcy saga represents just the tip of the iceberg in a healthcare industry beset by financial instability and questionable business practices. After failing to pay vendors like Brewster Ambulance, Steward has now taken the extraordinary step of suing to recover the partial payments it did make, claiming they were "preferential payments" under bankruptcy law. This legal maneuver has left already struggling vendors in an even more precarious position—first underpaid, and now potentially forced to return what little they did receive.</p> <p>This pattern of financial manipulation isn't isolated to Steward. As reported in the Post Acute Commission Meeting, the nursing home industry is facing a staggering \$630 million in unpaid bills. When distributed across approximately 330 facilities, this amounts to roughly \$1.9 million in debt per facility, with many operating on just four days of cash reserves. Such thin margins leave care facilities vulnerable to sudden disruption of services, closure, or severe service reductions.</p>

<p>He has over forty years of experience in health care and disability services management, policy, and quality assurance. He has a PhD in Policy, Research and Administration from the Heller School at Brandeis University.</p>	<p>The healthcare financial crisis affects multiple stakeholders. It threatens vendors providing critical services, including potential bankruptcy. Employees suffer from wage uncertainty, and most importantly, vulnerable patients are the ones who bear the brunt, experiencing disruptions in care quality and continuity. Many nursing homes and healthcare facilities have adopted aggressive financial engineering strategies. These strategies prioritize investor returns over operational stability and patient care. They create a system in which they extract profits while debt accumulates. This systemic problem requires not just any reform, but comprehensive regulatory reform and oversight. Initiatives like Chapter 197 are a step in the right direction, ensuring healthcare organizations maintain appropriate financial reserves, operate with greater transparency, and prioritize patient care over short-term economic gains. Without such reforms and oversight, the Commonwealth can expect more healthcare organizations to follow Steward's pattern—accumulating debt, undermining vendors, and ultimately leaving patients, communities, and businesses to suffer the consequences of their financial mismanagement.</p>
<p>By Dignity Alliance Massachusetts Participants</p>  <p>Sandy Alissa Novack, MBA, LICSW, ACSW, CSW-G is on the Board of Directors of the Disability Policy Consortium and volunteers with the Boston Center for Independent Living. Sandy is an active DignityMA participant and a regular contributor to <i>The Dignity Digest</i>.</p>	<p>Self-care During Challenging Times <u>Disability Issues</u> (Vol. 45, No. 2, Spring 2025) By Sandy Alissa Novack</p> <p>Does any of this sound familiar? Your income hasn't increased to keep pace with the rising costs of food or rent. You're not sure whether college is the right path for your child, and you're unsure what that might mean for their future. The family car stopped working, and you had to dip into your emergency fund to cover the cost of repairs. You've postponed surgery more than once to take care of responsibilities at work and home, yet you haven't had the chance to focus on your own health.</p> <p>Life can feel overwhelming at times. Whether you're balancing work, family, health concerns, or unexpected setbacks, it's easy to put your own needs at the bottom of the list. When we don't make time for rest and recovery, stress can take a toll – physically and emotionally. And in a time when healthcare services are often stretched, it's especially important to listen to what your body and mind are telling you.</p> <p>Even small steps toward self-care can make a big difference. Here are a few gentle reminders that may help you take better care of yourself and the people around you.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Set Aside "Me-Time" Every Day It might seem impossible to carve out time for yourself when your to-do list feels endless. Maybe you're juggling a job, have a pile of laundry to do, and a pet's vet appointment. Still, setting aside even 30 minutes a day – whether it's for a quiet walk in the park, reading a chapter of a good book, or doing something else that rejuvenates you can give you a much-needed moment of peace and perhaps joy. It's not selfish; it's essential. 2. Set Aside "Us-Time" Relationships thrive when we make time for connection. Whether it's your partner, a parent, a neighbor, or a friend, take the time to do more than exchange passing pleasantries as you run out the door. Instead, check in and

really listen or show up when they need a hand. When you're there for someone else, you create shared moments of care and support that benefit both of you. It feels good to be present for someone who is important to you, or even a stranger who you have a brief interaction with.

3. Find Reasons to Smile and Laugh

Some of us have gotten used to covering our smiles with face masks so we may not be smiling as much, but it's still important to find reasons to smile – at ourselves and with others. Go into the bathroom; yes now.

Smile at the mirror. Does it feel unnatural or that your lips are too tight? It's a sign that you may need to smile more. Try watching something funny – a comedy show, or a lighthearted movie. If you are lucky enough to have a friend who cracks great jokes, spend more time with them. Instead of stifling a belly laugh when you are out in public, let your hearty laugh ring out for all to hear – maybe others will join in. Smiling and laughter can lift your mood and reduce stress, so do it often.

4. Try Something Different

Routines are comforting, but a small change can offer a fresh perspective. If you always drive the same route to work or to the store, taking a new route can become an unexpected adventure. You may notice brilliant spring flowers blooming or see a bakery you've never tried so you stop in to treat yourself to a warm cookie that's just out of the oven. Maybe you'll see a Little League game and pull over to watch an inning. You don't have to spend a lot of money or time to add a little sparkle to your day.

5. Learn Something New

When life feels heavy, learning something new can add a bounce of excitement to your day. Maybe try your hand at quilting, plant tomatoes in a raised garden, or explore a new language – especially one that's spoken by neighbors or people in your community. Being curious and learning new things doesn't need to be formal to be enriching.

6. Find Your Voice

Do you want to feel heard? Of course you do. Sometimes, it helps to know that your thoughts and experiences matter. You might choose to write a letter to your local paper, speak at a community meeting or give testimony at the State House either in-person or virtually. It can be deeply meaningful to do something that contributes to positive change. Volunteer opportunities come in all shapes and sizes, from one-day events to ongoing commitments. You might help out at a hospital, support a health organization, or read with children at a local school.

The world can feel uncertain, and challenges come in many forms. While self-care won't solve every problem, it can help you build strength and resilience to better navigate whatever comes your way. Taking time for yourself and for others. It's a powerful way to stay hopeful and engaged.

How My Mind Helps Me Thrive

Disability Issues (Vol. 45, No. 2, Spring 2025)

By Penelope Ann Shaw

Twenty-four years ago, I became unexpectedly disabled. I was on life support and not expected to live – but I did. It left me with physical limitations that prevent me from standing, walking, washing or dressing myself, cooking or cleaning. I also have no fine motor skills. For example, I need scissors to open an envelope, I use a power wheelchair, and I'm unable to drive a car.



Penelope Ann Shaw, Ph.D., has a complex physical disability from Guillain-Barre Syndrome. She is a state and national advocate who uses her personal experiences to push for public policies that will improve the lives of children and adults with all types of disabilities. In Spring 2020, she was appointed as a member of the White House Coronavirus Task Force's Coronavirus Commission on Safety and Quality in Nursing Homes.

Because of these changes, I am more aware of the many ways my mind benefits me. I notice how often I journey inward to a different world where I have incredible skills. In this world, I have the ability to plan, analyze, make decisions, remember, reflect, observe, organize, recognize people, identify patterns and make sense of them. It's a place where I think creatively, synthesize, reason, communicate, evaluate information and experiences. All these abilities have practical applications, such as, they help me manage daily tasks, to focus my attention on something and ponder it. They help me to process different types of information, gaze inward at visual pictures, recognize sounds, distinguish colors, imagine new opportunities.

With my mind, I can process and interpret physical sensations like being hot, cold, in pain or fatigued as well as emotional sensations like being relaxed, pleased, concerned, frustrated, disappointed, determined. I use all my senses; not only visual, but also hearing, touch and smell. When I'm under pressure or feeling overly taxed or frustrated, I often cope with my worrisome thoughts by escaping into my mind. There, I gain new perspectives by quieting my thoughts and having an inner conversation with myself. I emerge feeling revitalized and more optimistic.

With visual perception and spatial awareness, I scan the environment to judge the distance and speed of vehicles crossing streets in front of me. If necessary, I can then stop to be safe before proceeding. Thus, I can simultaneously focus on driving my wheelchair and checking out my surroundings.

I am a curious person. I read the latest local, national and international news to learn about the world I live in and try to make sense of what is going on in it. When reading, I am inspired by new ideas and insights that provide useful points I want to make in pieces I'm writing. When editing the piece, my mind also triggers other ideas. In addition to finding intellectual tasks interesting and illuminating, they are also intellectually stimulating and rewarding. Coming up with new ideas is like being on a journey and traveling to a new country. Something I can no longer do in person.


Decision-making skills are essential to my well-being. I rely on them to solve problems and navigate hardships, which helps me feel more peaceful. Thinking things through is like consulting with and being supported by another person—my inner voice of guidance. I often talk through an issue in my mind and then decide how best to approach it based on the strategies I develop and evaluate. Sometimes, this process even includes an imagined conversation with the person I hope to influence.


With my language capabilities of French and some Spanish, I'm able to communicate with staff from various countries who work in my facility. Additionally, my skills with English as a Second Language, helps me communicate in English with staff who have limited proficiency.

I often let my mind wander freely and engage in daydreaming. For example, during the winter, I dream of summer and being outside, enjoying the warm weather. In this way, I look to the future. When I'm in bed at night, I often go to a quiet inner world where my cognitive functions stimulate me, keep me busy, and mitigate boredom. This

	<p>internal space is my office with no interrupting distractions. In bed, I often read books, using a pen and paper to write down thoughts for what I'm writing and to plan my days. Later, when I am asleep, my mind rests in preparation for the next day's work. Due to my paralysis, having something satisfying to do in bed is especially important because once I'm in bed, I cannot get up myself. I'll be there until the aides get me up the next morning.</p> <p>With my memory skills I store useful information and later retrieve what I need. With short-term memory, I can remember the name of a person I just met, a task I must complete or something I need to buy. With long-term memory, I can recall events from long ago, which I think I'd forgotten.</p> <p>I can reflect on my personal history, replay events and reminisce about the passage of time by calling up both people and experiences. Reflections can also be purposeful, such as, knowing people's names, or recalling information I've read and studied. All my memories are internally organized for easy access. It is like having a personal library where everything has been catalogued. I am amazed at how large the storage area is!</p> <p>Cognitive skills are especially useful when living in a nursing home. To get my care done right, I often need to figure out how to work with nursing assistants who have different personalities and skills. I also need to know how to inform, motivate and persuade the management of my facility to address the problems I encounter. With these skills, I survive institutional life. I would prefer home and community-based services, but I do not qualify for these since I'm a 2-person assist and require 24-hour access to care.</p> <p>Overall, I am amazed by my mind. I'm in awe of the power of thought and all it offers me. Because of it, I feel stronger, more confident, and uplifted. Most importantly, through the workings of my mind, I transcend my limitations. My cognitive abilities, interior journeys, and inner life liberate me from the constraints of my disability. Providing me with a positive state of mind and a full life each day – something for which I am appreciative of.</p> <p>In closing, I often ask myself – who could have predicted that when I was on life support and not expected to survive, I would one day thrive and live a full life thanks to my mind, my consciousness, my cognitive strengths and abilities that I benefit from every day?</p>
<p>Call for Presentations</p>	<p>Massachusetts Councils on Aging (MCOA) 2025 Fall Conference <u>Call for Presentations</u></p> <p>Planning for the MCOA 2025 Fall Conference is now underway. This year's theme is "Facing the Future Together". MCOA's call for presentations is officially open. The organizers are looking for engaging, innovative, and impactful sessions to make this year's conference the best one yet. If you have knowledge, insights, or creative solutions to share with the aging services network, you are encouraged to submit a proposal. Submissions are due by May 19, 2025.</p> <p><u>Learn More & Apply</u></p> <p>National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care <u>Call for Presentations</u> <i>Session Proposals for the Consumer Voice Conference Due May 2</i></p>

	<p>2025 Consumer Voice Conference at the Renaissance Arlington Capital View Hotel in Arlington, Virginia, November 3-6, 2025.</p> <p>Consumer Voice's Annual Conference educates and empowers long-term care consumers and consumer advocates. The conference covers long-term care issues, including current trends, best practices, advocacy opportunities, and new research. Attendees have the opportunity to learn, network, and exchange ideas with advocates from all over the country.</p> <p>Submit a Proposal to Present a Session:</p> <p>Review the Call for Proposals and Presenter Requirements.</p> <p>Submit your proposal via SurveyMonkey. NOTE: You will not be able to save incomplete submissions in SurveyMonkey, so you may want to review and print or save the PDF version of the proposal questions so you can plan your responses prior to starting the submission.</p> <p>Proposals are due by May 2, 2025. Late or incomplete proposals will not be considered.</p>
<p>Call to Action Take Action on the PNA</p> <p>Ask your legislators to co-sponsor PNA legislation. https://dignityalliancema.org/take-action/#/25</p> <p>Residents, family, staff: Add your story about personal needs allowances. https://tinyurl.com/PNAStory</p>	<p><i>Increase the personal needs allowance (PNA) for nursing home residents</i> <i>Dignity Alliance Massachusetts' Top Legislative Proposal for the 2025-2026 Session</i></p> <p>House Sponsor: Rep. Thomas Stanley; Senate Sponsor: Senator Joan Lovely</p> <p>Please take a moment to contact your state senator and state representative, and other state legislators in your area to ask them to support the increase in the Personal Needs Allowance for nursing home residents both by supporting bills (SD2385, SD401, and HD830) that would increase the amount as well as amendments in the state budget when that gets debated in April and May.</p> <p>Nursing home residents are forced to make choices when purchasing items not provided by the nursing home since a monthly allowance of \$72.80 doesn't go very far today! If it had been linked to increases in inflation when it was last set in FY'07, it should be at least \$113.42.</p> <p>The Personal Needs Allowance is a minimal amount of monthly income that a nursing home resident can retain for personal use. It covers expenses such as clothing, hair appointments, vitamins, books, magazines, stationery, stamps, cell phone costs, and favorite snacks.</p> <p>By using our handy outreach form, it only takes a minute. In addition, if you should meet any state legislators in the next few months, let them know you'd appreciate their support of Dignity Alliance legislation and budget amendments.</p> <p>For more information / questions contact Dick Moore, DignityMA Legislative Workgroup Chair, rmoores8743@charter.net.</p> <p>Ask Legislators to Increase the MA Personal Needs Allowance</p>
<p>Advocacy Under the Golden Dome</p>	<p>Older Adult Lobby Day Tuesday, May 13, 2025 Great Hall, State House, Boston Organized by Mass Aging Access Multiple organizations, including DignityMA, will be participating.</p>

	<p>If you plan to attend, please register here: https://agingaccess.org/lobby-day/ For more information, contact Ellen Taintor, ETaintor@agingaccess.org</p>
<p>April Is National Volunteer Month</p>  <p>Link to response form: https://forms.gle/TKSA8Ga8QWPRkKJ2FA</p>	<p>Dignity Alliance Massachusetts - Five Years of Collective Effort Five years ago, in the earliest days of the Covid pandemic, Dignity Alliance Massachusetts was established as a volunteer-driven to transform the provision of long-term services and care in the Commonwealth. Since that time, hundreds of individuals and organizations have used their collective voices and efforts to make a real difference through legislation, regulatory reform, public policy, and information sharing. On behalf of Massachusetts older adults, persons with disabilities, and caregivers, heartfelt appreciation is gratefully extended to all involved. Together, we look forward to even more and greater achievements in the year ahead. We welcome hearing from you about your involvement with DignityMA: what motivates your participation and what you would like to see accomplished in the year ahead. Link to response form: https://forms.gle/TKSA8Ga8QWPRkKJ2FA</p>
Recruitment	See: Listings on MASsterList.com's Job Board for all current listings
Guide to news items in this week's <i>Dignity Digest</i>	<p>FY 2026 State Budget Spend Now, React Later (*State House News, April 18, 2025)</p> <p>Nursing Homes 'I don't want to be here forever': The hidden struggle of middle-aged adults living in nursing homes (The Journal, April 20, 2025) New List of Special Focus Facilities Available (The Consumer's Voice, April 15, 2025) Skyline's Schwartz gets 3 years in prison for scheme that collapsed dozens of nursing homes (McKnights Long Term Care News, April 10, 2025)</p> <p>Medicaid 1 in 5 Americans are on Medicaid. Some enrollees have no idea (PBS News, April 13, 2025)</p> <p>Aging Topics At 77, she's as fit as a 25-year-old. What her body tells us about aging. (*Washington Post, April 20, 2025)</p> <p>Workforce Healey-Driscoll Administration Awards Community Colleges \$9.7 Million to Strengthen the Massachusetts Health Care Workforce (Office of Governor Maura Healey and Lt. Governor Kim Driscoll, April 17, 2025)</p> <p>Public Policy Rising drug prices are hammering patients, employers, and insurers. Is there any end in sight? (*Boston Globe, April 17, 2025) Blue Cross Blue Shield will stop covering popular weight-loss drugs amid surging costs (*Boston Globe, April 17, 2025) Health care spending in Massachusetts soared in 2023. Here's what's to blame (*Boston Globe, March 25, 2025)</p> <p>From Our Colleagues Around the Country</p>

	<p><u>Disability Issues</u> (Vol. 45, No. 2, Spring 2025)</p> <p>Public Sessions</p> <p><u>Remote public hearing</u> on proposed amendments to increase rates for seven children's behavioral health services. (Executive Office of Health and Human Services, Tuesday, April 22, 2025, 10:00 a.m.)</p> <p><u>Public hearing</u> on bills dealing with estate law, (Joint Committee on the Judiciary, Tuesday, April 22, 2025, 1:00 p.m., Room A-2, State House, Boston)</p> <p><u>Remote public hearing</u> on proposed rate increases for the Program of Assertive Community Treatment services, (Executive Office of Health and Human Services, Tuesday, April 22, 2025, 1:00 p.m.)</p> <p><u>Virtual event</u> role of guide dogs (Massachusetts Commission for the Blind, Friday, April 25, 2025, 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.)</p> <p><u>Sickle Cell Hearing</u> (Executive Office of Health and Human Services, Friday, April 25, 2025, 10:00 a.m.)</p>
<p>DignityMA Study Session</p>  <p>James Roosevelt, former Associate Commissioner, U.S. Social Security Administration</p>	<p><i>Social Security: It's history, current issues, and advocacy options</i> Thursday, May 22, 2025, 2:00 p.m. Presenter: James Roosevelt, JD, former Associate Commissioner, U.S. Social Security Administration Registration required: <u>https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/t5wRZ6KJTVKqmn-T6RIRhA</u></p> <p>Jim advises health care payers, providers, trade associations, and service providers on business matters, legislative and regulatory issues, governance, and personnel matters. He regularly represents medical device and medical process startups, including with respect to telehealth, artificial intelligence, and treatment utilizing legal psychedelics. He is also a national speaker and author on the Affordable Care Act, Medicare and Medicaid policy, and Social Security.</p> <p>For more than 10 years, Jim was CEO of Tufts Health Plan, where he led a turnaround that nearly doubled the membership and achieved consistent profitability while attaining #1 ranking in the United States from the national accrediting organization. He was previously in-house General Counsel and was a former partner in the Health Care Practice Group of Choate, Hall and Stewart in Boston. Before joining Tufts Health Plan, he served as Associate Commissioner of the U.S. Social Security Administration.</p> <p>In 2016, Jim was a visiting fellow at the Institute of Politics of the Harvard Kennedy School of Government. He continues as a clinical instructor in the Public Health and Community Medicine Department of Tufts University School of Medicine.</p>
<p>Recognitions</p>	<p><i>[Former State Senator Harriet] Chandler to receive prestigious 2025 Harvey Ball Smile Award</i> The Worcester Guardian April 18, 2025 By Charlene Arsenault</p> <p><i>The Museum of Worcester honors longtime senator and trailblazing political leader at this year's annual celebration.</i></p> <p>Harriette "Harlee" Chandler, a significant figure in Massachusetts politics and a champion for women's rights with deep ties to Worcester, is set to receive the 2025 Harvey Ball Smile Award. The</p>



Harriette Chandler served on the MA State Senate from 2001 until her retirement in 2022 (photo credit: Mass.gov)

Editor's note: DignityMA presented Senator Chandler a Lifetime Achievement Award in 2022.



Photo by Anna Krieger

Museum of Worcester announced this honor, recognizing Chandler's impactful career, which includes being the first female president of the Massachusetts Senate. The award ceremony will take place on October 23rd at Mechanics Hall, coinciding with the conclusion of Worcester's year-long commemoration of the 175th anniversary of the first National Women's Rights Convention held in the city. Bill Wallace, Executive Director of the Museum of Worcester, emphasized Chandler's historical importance and distinguished legislative career. Chandler, who moved to Worcester in 1959, expressed her surprise and reflected on her long-standing connection and commitment to the city. Her public service began in 1991 with the Worcester School Committee and progressed through the House of Representatives to the Senate, where she served until 2022, making history as Senate President in 2018.

Throughout her career, Chandler championed crucial issues such as healthcare access, education, and reproductive rights, notably through her work on the ROE Act. She also supported vital revitalization projects in Worcester, including the restoration of Union Station and the development of the Ghosh Science Center at Worcester State University. Ed Augustus, Massachusetts Secretary of Housing and Livable Communities, lauded Chandler as a "champion for women and girls."

Chandler expressed pride in her time on the school committee and her legislative service, highlighting her joy in crafting legislation and collaborating with colleagues to improve the lives of her constituents in Worcester. She acknowledged Worcester as a unique place characterized by collaboration and genuine care among its residents, expressing her gratitude for the opportunity to contribute to the community.

The Harvey Ball Smile Award, established in 2001 in honor of the Worcester native who created the Smiley Face, annually recognizes individuals or organizations that have positively impacted the city. This year's event also aligns with the museum's broader initiative to celebrate Worcester's pivotal role in the early women's rights movement and coincides with World Smile Day in October. The Museum of Worcester, a long-standing institution, continues to preserve and share the city's history, including the significant achievements of figures like Harriette Chandler.

Events

Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation's Universal Access Program
[Adaptive Recreation Fair](#)
 Saturday, June 7, 2025, 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
 Herter Park / Artesani Playground
 1255 Soldiers Field Road, Brighton

Family-friendly, accessible, and inclusive activities include: cycling with an assortment of adaptive cycles, adaptive pickleball, adaptive golf, face painting and kite decorating, sidewalk chalking, equipment demonstrations (including hiking, surfing, and fencing), games, music, and much more. Find out about adaptive summer programs across the state!

Pre-Registration is Recommended. Especially if you need an accommodation. You can pre-register by going [online](#), calling Teri

	<p>at (413) 461-7126, or emailing DCR.UniversalAccess@mass.gov. When requesting accommodations, please allow at least two weeks (14 days) advance notice. Last minute requests will be accepted, but we may be unable to fulfill the request.</p> <p>Parking is free but Limited</p>
Webinars and Online Sessions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Executive Office of Aging and Independence Tuesday, June 3, 2025, 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. SHINE Health Benefits University The Massachusetts SHINE (Serving the Health Insurance Needs of Everyone on Medicare) program will be hosting a Health Benefits University Webinar. Kathleen Gouveia, the SHINE Training Coordinator will present on the different parts of Medicare, Medicare eligibility, enrollment periods, coverage options and costs, 2025 Updates, the Medicare Plan Finder, programs that help with the costs of Medicare and other resources. Registration is required. 2. Executive Office of Aging and Independence Thursday, August 7, 2025, 3:00 to 5:00 p.m. SHINE Health Benefits University The Massachusetts SHINE (Serving the Health Insurance Needs of Everyone on Medicare) program will be hosting a Health Benefits University Webinar. Kathleen Gouveia, the SHINE Training Coordinator will present on the different parts of Medicare, Medicare eligibility, enrollment periods, coverage options and costs, 2025 Updates, the Medicare Plan Finder, programs that help with the costs of Medicare and other resources. Registration is required.
Previously posted webinars and online sessions	<p>Previously posted webinars and online sessions can be viewed at: https://dignityalliancema.org/webinars-and-online-sessions/</p>
FY 2026 State Budget	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. *State House News April 18, 2025 Spend Now, React Later By Colin A. Young Summary: This week in Massachusetts, a significant event is unfolding: the unveiling of the House's proposed \$61.4 billion budget for fiscal year 2026. Despite concerns about potential federal funding cuts under President Trump, the House budget proposes a 6.4% increase in spending compared to the current year. House budget chief Aaron Michlewitz emphasized the need for these services amidst federal uncertainty, highlighting that their proposal starts with a nearly \$600 million lower bottom line than Governor Healey's initial plan, offering some flexibility. Notably, the House budget level-funds unrestricted general government aid for cities and towns, a departure from the usual practice of tying increases to state tax revenue growth. This decision is somewhat offset by a significant proposed increase in per-pupil school aid. While House Republicans are expected to push for more local aid, the Massachusetts Municipal Association will also advocate for increased investments in cities and towns.
Nursing Homes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. The Journal April 20, 2025

['I don't want to be here forever': The hidden struggle of middle-aged adults living in nursing homes](#)

By Lauren Boland

In Ireland, over 1,200 individuals under 65 are living in nursing homes designed for older people due to a lack of suitable housing and care alternatives, leading to frustration and a desire for change. One man in his 50s, John, with Friedreich's Ataxia, shared his despair at being forced to live in a nursing home with residents whose needs are very different from his. After his mother, his primary caregiver, passed away, he was placed in a nursing home he believed would be temporary but was pressured to stay. He experienced difficult conditions and insufficient support, facing the threat of being moved far from his family or being sent to a hospital with uncertain placement afterward. He felt compelled to sign up for the Fair Deal scheme, which will take a significant portion of his disability allowance.

John feels his needs for support and activities are not met in the nursing home, causing him significant distress. His situation reflects a broader issue in Ireland: a shortage of residences catering to physical disabilities as opposed to older age or intellectual disabilities. An Ombudsman report in 2021, "Wasted Lives," highlighted the dissatisfaction, financial challenges, and lack of meaningful input in decisions faced by under-65s in nursing homes. The report recommended ring-fenced budgets and procedural guidelines for Fair Deal applications. While the HSE reports that 102 people have been moved to more suitable community homes since 2021 and others have received enhanced quality of life supports, an average of 32 under-65s continue to enter nursing homes monthly. Both the HSE and the Department of Disability acknowledge the need for alternative supported living solutions and recognize that the demand for disability residential placements exceeds current availability, citing housing shortages and staffing challenges as barriers. Disability rights organizations emphasize that many disabled individuals are living in unsuitable accommodations, calling for stronger government commitments to provide more appropriate housing and support for independent living. John voices a common concern, questioning how many others are in similar situations and why more suitable options are not available.

5. The Consumer's Voice

April 15, 2025


[New List of Special Focus Facilities Available](#)

For information about Massachusetts facilities, see *List of Special Focus Facilities* on page 26 of *The Digest*.

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (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. It is important to note that there are only 88 SFFs at one time, while there is a list of hundreds of SFF candidates, all of which meet the SFF criteria.

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

	<p>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.</p> <p>This is important information for consumers – particularly as they consider a nursing home.</p> <p>What can advocates do with this information?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. <p>6. McKnights Long Term Care News</p> <p>April 10, 2025</p> <p><u>Skyline's Schwartz gets 3 years in prison for scheme that collapsed dozens of nursing homes</u></p> <p>By Kimberly Marselas</p> <p>The former owner of Skyline Healthcare, which included 95 long-term care facilities in 11 states, has been <u>sentenced</u> to three years in prison. Joseph Schwartz perpetrated a \$39 million tax evasion scheme in which he siphoned off employee's tax payments before they could be sent to the IRS. Schwartz also owes \$5 million in restitution. State officials took over dozens of Skyline nursing homes through the receivership process after concerns about resident safety, including residents not getting food and medicine. Scrutiny around the Skyline case has increased calls for further ownership transparency requirements for federally funded nursing homes.</p>
Medicaid	<p>7. PBS News</p> <p>April 13, 2025</p> <p><u>1 in 5 Americans are on Medicaid. Some enrollees have no idea</u></p> <p>By Anna Claire Vollers, Stateline</p> <p>Summary:</p> <p>Many Americans relying on Medicaid for healthcare are unaware their insurance is funded by the program, partly because state Medicaid programs often use friendlier names like SoonerCare or Apple Health and are typically administered by private insurance companies, leading to commercial branding on insurance cards and paperwork. This lack of clear identification can cause beneficiaries to not realize they have Medicaid or understand its value.</p> <p>Dr. Adam Brown notes that patients often don't have anything explicitly stating "Medicaid," making it difficult for them to connect their coverage to the program being targeted for potential funding cuts by congressional Republicans. These proposed cuts aim to offset tax cuts and would likely force states to reduce services or coverage. Brown emphasizes that this</p>

	<p>confusion hinders public understanding of how Medicaid cuts could negatively impact both Medicaid recipients and the broader healthcare system, including hospitals.</p> <p>Data indicates that a significant majority of Medicaid enrollees are in managed care organizations with private branding, further obscuring the public funding source. Millions of Medicaid recipients even mistakenly believe they are uninsured. Experts worry this lack of awareness could affect public debate on Medicaid funding. While Medicaid enjoys broad public support, many are unaware of proposed cuts and their potential consequences on healthcare access and quality for everyone. Brown stresses the importance of understanding one's benefits to effectively advocate for them and recognize the wider implications of Medicaid funding decisions.</p>
<p>Aging Topics</p>  <p>Jeannie Rice, who turned 77 on April 14, has broken many world women's age group records. She ran in the Boston Marathon on Monday. (Loughborough University)</p>	<p>8. *Washington Post April 20, 2025 <u>At 77, she's as fit as a 25-year-old. What her body tells us about aging.</u> By Marlene Cimonis <i>Researchers are studying runner Jeannie Rice, who has "outstanding" fitness, to learn how we can stay healthy as we age.</i> Summary: Jeannie Rice, a 77-year-old runner, defies typical age-related performance decline. She holds world records in the 75-79 age group, sometimes surpassing even the fastest men in that category. At 5'2" and 95 pounds, her maximal oxygen uptake (VO2 max) matches that of a 25-year-old woman. Researchers are studying Rice to understand healthy aging and sustained fitness. They've found her "exceptional" VO2 max indicates "outstanding" cardiovascular fitness, far exceeding that of average women in her age group. Her consistent training (50-75 miles per week), balanced training and recovery, and healthy diet (avoiding fried foods and sweets) are key contributors. Beyond physical factors, her passion for running, a rich social life, and gratitude also play a role. Rice started running at 35 and has completed 133 marathons. She inspires others, including Joan Benoit Samuelson, and aims to continue running into her 80s.</p>
<p>Workforce</p>	<p>9. Office of Governor Maura Healey and Lt. Governor Kim Driscoll April 17, 2025 <u>Healey-Driscoll Administration Awards Community Colleges \$9.7 Million to Strengthen the Massachusetts Health Care Workforce</u> <i>Funding supports certified nursing assistant, medical assistant, and other health care training programs</i> The Healey-Driscoll Administration has allocated \$9.7 million through the Community College Nursing Grant to enhance workforce training in vital health care professions throughout Massachusetts. This funding will enable all 15 of the state's public community colleges to offer noncredit Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) and Medical Assistant training programs, with the goal of serving approximately 1,125 students. These accelerated, noncredit programs aim to swiftly address workforce demands by equipping individuals with practical, job-ready skills that can lead to career advancement. Governor Healey emphasized the importance of experienced health care workers and noted that these programs will strengthen the nursing</p>

	<p>pipeline to meet the needs of both employers and patients. Lieutenant Governor Driscoll highlighted the rapid growth of STEM occupations and the importance of creating accessible pathways to nursing and health care careers.</p> <p>This investment is intended to bolster the Massachusetts health care industry by developing a skilled workforce and creating training and employment opportunities for individuals from diverse backgrounds. These programs can also serve as a stepping stone for further education in health care.</p> <p>Education Secretary Dr. Patrick Tutwiler underscored the link between improving access to higher education and meeting workforce needs. Health and Human Services Secretary Kate Walsh emphasized that these grants are one way the state is supporting health care professionals. Commissioner of Higher Education Noe Ortega recognized the ability of community colleges to quickly address workforce needs and provide pathways to in-demand careers. Data from February 2025 indicates that the top four employers with the most job postings in Massachusetts were in the health care sector, and the demand for registered nurses in the state is projected to grow by approximately 9 percent by the early 2030s.</p> <p>This announcement follows an additional \$76 million awarded by the administration for student loan repayment for behavioral health and primary care providers through the MA Repay Program.</p> <p>Community college presidents Luis Pedraja (Quinsigamond Community College) and David Podell (MassBay Community College) expressed their gratitude for the funding, highlighting the critical shortages in health care and the ability of community colleges to provide accessible, high-quality training that leads to sustainable wages and a healthier Commonwealth.</p>
Public Policy	<p>10. *Boston Globe April 17, 2025 <u><i>Rising drug prices are hammering patients, employers, and insurers. Is there any end in sight?</i></u> By Robert Weisman <i>Soaring demand for high-priced weight loss drugs, known as GLP-1s, has worsened affordability issues</i> Summary: The rising cost of prescription drugs is exacerbating the affordability crisis in the region, impacting patients, health plans, and employers. While President Trump issued an executive order with the aim of lowering drug prices, its effect is pending the creation of new federal rules. Further cost increases could occur if tariffs are imposed on pharmaceuticals. The increasing adoption of GLP-1 weight-loss drugs and a robust pipeline of expensive new therapies for conditions like cancer and Alzheimer's are also driving up spending. In response, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts will stop covering GLP-1 drugs for obesity, while continuing coverage for diabetes. Massachusetts lawmakers passed a bill capping out-of-pocket costs for insulin and some other essential medicines and are considering further legislation to control a broader range of drug prices. State data reveals a significant increase in health care spending, with prescription drugs being the fastest-growing cost. Health insurers are experiencing losses due to the demand for GLP-1 drugs, potentially leading to premium increases.</p>

The lack of transparency in drug pricing is a concern for state officials, who are working to gather data on drug costs and transactions. While the federal government has taken some steps to negotiate drug prices through Medicare, these measures are limited and will take time to implement. Drug manufacturers continue to raise prices, although industry officials argue that the value of new medicines, like GLP-1s, in preventing other costly conditions should be considered. Despite efforts to control costs through rebates and price caps, the upward trend in drug prices in Massachusetts is expected to continue, creating a growing burden for patients.

11. *Boston Globe

April 17, 2025

[Blue Cross Blue Shield will stop covering popular weight-loss drugs amid surging costs](#)

By Robert Weisman

Large employers will have the option of continuing to cover GLP-1 medications

Summary:

The escalating demand for GLP-1 drugs, praised for their broad health benefits, is pushing insurers and employers towards a financial crisis, as highlighted by Blue Cross's recent policy change. Blue Cross is responding to employer concerns about the rising costs by giving them the option to not cover GLP-1s for weight loss. This decision impacts a significant portion of their members who use these drugs for weight management, potentially requiring them to pay around \$1,200 monthly out-of-pocket if their employer opts out of coverage.

The financial strain is evident as the Massachusetts Group Insurance Commission faces a substantial monthly deficit partly due to GLP-1 costs and is projected to run out of funds prematurely. Blue Cross's spending on five key GLP-1 drugs more than doubled in 2024, representing a significant portion of their total drug expenditure increase. Massachusetts has seen a substantial surge in GLP-1 prescriptions for obesity, ranking third nationally in this increase.

While Blue Cross's policy directly affects fully insured plans, self-insured employers have more flexibility, and some have already chosen not to cover these drugs for weight loss. Point32Health, another major insurer in the state, has not yet restricted coverage but is prioritizing a specific GLP-1 drug for obesity treatment. Employers, particularly smaller ones, are expressing support for measures that help control these rising healthcare costs. The situation underscores the broader challenge of increasing prescription drug costs and their impact on the healthcare system.

12. *Boston Globe

March 25, 2025

[Health care spending in Massachusetts soared in 2023. Here's what's to blame.](#)

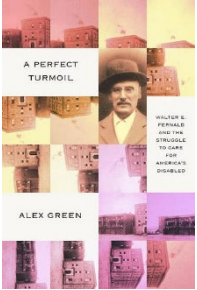
By Jonathan Saltzman

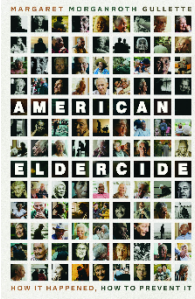
The one-year increase was the second highest since the state established its benchmark to rein in expenditures in 2013

Summary:

Center for Health Information and Analysis (CHIA) director Lauren Peters expressed significant concern over Massachusetts' health care spending, which surged by 8.6 percent to \$11,153 per resident in 2023.¹ She

	<p>warned that these unsustainable cost growth trends are pressuring residents, employers, and the entire system, necessitating urgent and comprehensive solutions. The CHIA report identified prescription drugs and new MassHealth payments as primary drivers of this increase. Spending on medications rose by 11.6 percent to \$15.2 billion, the largest share of overall health expenditures. The rise in spending is partly attributed to expensive weight-loss drugs, with an anticipated greater impact in 2024 due to increased GLP-1 drug use. The report also highlighted the widespread issue of healthcare affordability, disproportionately affecting Hispanic and non-Hispanic Black residents. While Health Policy Commission director David Seltz echoed concerns about rising pharmacy costs, the Massachusetts Biotechnology Council questioned the sole focus on drug prices, advocating for a more comprehensive analysis. Similarly, the Massachusetts Health & Hospital Association suggested that the state's spending growth benchmark is outdated. Furthermore, health policy expert Alan Sager contended that CHIA's figures significantly underestimate the total health care spending, potentially by 45 percent, suggesting considerable waste within the system</p>
<p>From Our Colleagues Around the Country</p>	<p>13. Disability Issues <i>Vol. 45, No. 2, Spring 2025</i> Table of Contents From the Editor Marianne DiBlasi Feeling Artwork from the Masters! Stephen Plummer The Emergence of Wholeness Marybeth Barker Accessible Art with Centuries of Styles, Materials, and Artists for Inspiration Karen Stark / Emily Bhargava Self-care During Challenging Times Sandy Alissa Novack How my Mind Helps me Thrive Penelope Ann Shaw Love & Intimacy Corner Mammograms and Accessibility Ms. Love Info Briefs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ArtsBoston All Access Calendar • Discovery Museum • Adaptive Recreation Fair </p>
<p>Public Sessions</p>	<p>14. Executive Office of Health and Human Services Tuesday, April 22, 2025, 10:00 a.m. Remote public hearing Hearing on proposed amendments to increase rates for seven children's behavioral health services. EOHHS also wants to establish a new service, called Family-based Intensive Treatment, and remove rates for mobile crisis intervention services provided in a hospital emergency department due to a new billing structure. Written testimony will be accepted through 5 p.m. More Info and Access</p> <p>15. Joint Committee on the Judiciary Tuesday, April 22, 2025, 1:00 p.m. Room A-2, State House, Boston Public hearing Bills dealing with estate law, which deals with management of an individual's assets during their lifetime and after their death; probate law, which concerns a deceased person's estate; and family law, which involves several areas including marriage, divorce, child custody, domestic violence and reproductive rights, according to the committee's</p>

	<p>definitions. Also scheduled bills dealing with health care proxies, medical decision making, predatory guardianship, and other topics.</p> <p>Agenda and Access Info</p> <p>16. Executive Office of Health and Human Services Tuesday, April 22, 2025, 1:00 p.m. Remote public hearing Proposed rate increases for the Program of Assertive Community Treatment services. The service model is for people with serious mental illnesses who could benefit from coordinated care. The annualized cost of the rate increase is \$1.36 million, officials say. Written testimony will be accepted through 5 p.m. More Info and Access</p> <p>17. Massachusetts Commission for the Blind Friday, April 25, 2025, 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. Virtual event Role of guide dogs in boosting independence and mobility for individuals with vision loss. Presenters include Ally Bull of MCB, Jane Flower and Megan Dameron of Guide Dogs for the Blind, and Susanne Agerbak of the Massachusetts Office on Disability. Zoom</p> <p>18. Executive Office of Health and Human Services Friday, April 25, 2025, 10:00 a.m. Sickle Cell Hearing A remote public hearing to solicit input about the needs of MassHealth members with sickle cell disease. Agenda and Access Info</p>
<p>Books by DignityMA Participants</p>  <p>About the Author: Alex Green teaches political communications at Harvard Kennedy School and is a visiting fellow at the Harvard Law School Project on Disability and a visiting scholar at Brandeis University Lurie Institute for Disability Policy. He is the author of legislation to create a first-of-its-kind, disability-led human rights commission to investigate the history of state institutions for disabled people in Massachusetts.</p>	<p><i>A Perfect Turmoil: Walter E. Fernald and the Struggle to Care for America's Disabled</i> By Alex Green</p> <p>From the moment he became superintendent of the nation's oldest public school for intellectually and developmentally disabled children in 1887 until his death in 1924, Dr. Walter E. Fernald led a wholesale transformation of our understanding of disabilities in ways that continue to influence our views today. How did the man who designed the first special education class in America, shaped the laws of entire nations, and developed innovative medical treatments for the disabled slip from idealism into the throes of eugenics before emerging as an opponent of mass institutionalization? Based on a decade of research, <i>A Perfect Turmoil</i> is the story of a doctor, educator, and policymaker who was unafraid to reverse course when convinced by the evidence, even if it meant going up against some of the most powerful forces of his time.</p> <p>In this landmark work, Alex Green has drawn upon extensive, unexamined archives to unearth the hidden story of one of America's largely forgotten, but most complex, conflicted, and significant figures.</p> <p>Buy the book here</p>
<p>Books by DignityMA Participants</p>	<p><i>American Eldercide: How It Happened, How to Prevent It</i> By Margaret Morganroth Gullette</p>



About the Author:

Margaret Morganroth Gullette is a cultural critic and anti-ageism pioneer whose prize-winning work is foundational in critical age studies. She is the author of several books, including *Agewise*, *Aged by Culture*, and *Ending Ageism, or How Not to Shoot Old People*. Her writing has appeared in publications such as the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Guardian*, *Atlantic*, *Nation*, and the *Boston Globe*. She is a resident scholar at the Women's Studies Research Center, Brandeis, and lives in Newton, Massachusetts.

A bracing spotlight on the avoidable causes of the COVID-19 Eldercide in the United States.

Twenty percent of the Americans who have died of COVID since 2020 have been older and disabled adults residing in nursing homes—even though they make up fewer than one percent of the US population. Something about this catastrophic loss of life in government-monitored facilities has never added up.

Until now. In *American Eldercide*, activist and scholar Margaret Morganroth Gullette investigates this tragic public health crisis with a passionate voice and razor-sharp attention to detail, showing us that nothing about it was inevitable. By unpacking the decisions that led to discrimination against nursing home residents, revealing how governments, doctors, and media reinforced ageist or ableist biases, and collecting the previously little-heard voices of the residents who survived, Gullette helps us understand the workings of what she persuasively calls an eldercide.

Gullette argues that it was our collective indifference, fueled by the heightened ageism of the COVID-19 era, that prematurely killed this vulnerable population. Compounding that deadly indifference is our own panic about aging and a social bias in favor of youth-based decisions about lifesaving care. The compassion this country failed to muster for the residents of our nursing facilities motivated Gullette to pen an act of remembrance, issuing a call for pro-aging changes in policy and culture that would improve long-term care for everyone.

[Buy the book here.](#)

Bringing People Home: The Marsters Settlement

Webpages:

https://www.centerforpublicrep.org/court_case/marsters-et-al-v-healey-et-al/
<https://marsters.centerforpublicrep.org/>

Support Dignity Alliance Massachusetts

[Please Donate!](#)

Dignity Alliance Massachusetts is a grassroots, volunteer-run 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to transformative change to ensure the dignity of older adults, people with disabilities, and their caregivers. We are committed to advancing ways of providing long-term services, support, living options and care that respect individual choice and self-determination. Through education, legislation, regulatory reform, and legal strategies, this mission will become reality throughout the Commonwealth.

As a fully volunteer operation, our financial needs are modest, but also real. Your donation helps to produce and distribute *The Dignity Digest* weekly free of charge to almost 1,000 recipients and maintain our website, www.DignityAllianceMA.org, which has thousands of visits each month.

Consider a donation in memory or honor of someone. The names of those recognized will be included in The Dignity Digest and posted on the website.

<https://dignityalliancema.org/donate/>

Thank you for your consideration!

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</p> <p>Questions or comments can be directed to Legislative Work Group Chair Richard (Dick) Moore at rmooore8473@charter.net.</p>	
Websites	<p>Meals on Wheels America https://www.mealsonwheelsamerica.org/</p> <p>Meals on Wheels America is the leadership organization supporting the more than 5,000 community-based programs across the country that are dedicated to addressing senior hunger and isolation. Powered by a trusted volunteer workforce, this network delivers a comprehensive solution that begins with a meal and is proven to enable independence and well-being through the additional benefits of tailored nutrition, social connection, safety and much more.</p> <p>Care Source https://www.caresource.com</p> <p>CareSource is a nationally recognized, nonprofit managed care organization serving over 2 million members. Founded in 1989, CareSource administers one of the largest Medicaid managed care plans in the U.S. The organization offers a variety of health insurance plans, including Medicaid, Medicare and Health Insurance Marketplace products. As a mission-driven and member-centric organization, CareSource is transforming health care by providing innovative programs to members in a growing number of states, including Arkansas, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, North Carolina, Ohio, West Virginia and Wisconsin.</p> <p>Veterans Healthcare Policy Institute https://veteranspolicy.org/</p> <p>The Veterans Healthcare Policy Institute is a non-partisan non-profit research and policy organization that studies the provision of healthcare and other services to the those who served in the U.S. military, as well as their families and communities.</p>	
Blogs		
Podcasts		
YouTube Channels		
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/	
Contact information for reporting complaints and concerns	Nursing home	<p>Department of Public Health</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Print and complete the Consumer/Resident/Patient Complaint Form 2. Fax completed form to (617) 753-8165 <p>Or</p> <p>Mail to 67 Forest Street, Marlborough, MA 01752</p> <p>Ombudsman Program</p>

MassHealth Eligibility Information	<p><u>MassHealth / Massachusetts Medicaid Income & Asset Limits for Nursing Homes & Long-Term Care</u></p> <p><u>Table of Contents</u> (Last updated: December 16, 2024)</p> <p><u>Massachusetts Medicaid Long-Term Care Definition</u></p> <p><u>Income & Asset Limits for Eligibility</u></p> <p><u>Income Definition & Exceptions</u></p> <p><u>Asset Definition & Exceptions</u></p> <p><u>Home Exemption Rules</u></p> <p><u>Medical / Functional Need Requirements</u></p> <p><u>Qualifying When Over the Limits</u></p> <p><u>Specific Massachusetts Medicaid Programs</u></p> <p><u>How to Apply for Massachusetts Medicaid</u></p>
Money Follows the Person	<p>MassHealth</p> <p><u>Money Follows the Person</u></p> <p>The Money Follows the Person (MFP) Demonstration helps older adults and people with disabilities move from nursing facilities, chronic disease or rehabilitation hospitals, or other qualified facilities back to the community.</p> <p>Statistics as of March 31, 2025:</p> <p>344 people transitioned out of nursing facilities in 2024</p> <p>49 transitions in January and February 2025</p> <p>910 currently in transition planning</p> <p><u>Open PDF file, 1.34 MB. MFP Demonstration Brochure</u></p> <p><u>MFP Demonstration Brochure - Accessible Version</u></p> <p><u>MFP Demonstration Fact Sheet</u></p> <p><u>MFP Demonstration Fact Sheet - Accessible Version</u></p>
Nursing Home Closures	<p>List of Nursing Home Closures in Massachusetts Since July 2021:</p> <p><u>https://dignityalliancema.org/2025/04/07/nursing-home-closures-since-july-2021/</u></p>
Determination of Need Projects	<p>List of Determination of Need Applications regarding nursing homes since 2020:</p> <p><u>https://dignityalliancema.org/2025/04/07/list-of-determination-of-need-applications/</u></p> <p>Pending: <u>Town of Nantucket – Long Term Care Substantial Capital Expenditure</u></p>
List of Special Focus Facilities	<p>Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services</p> <p><i>List of Special Focus Facilities and Candidates</i></p> <p><u>https://www.cms.gov/files/document/sff-posting-candidate-list-march-2025.pdf</u></p> <p>Updated March 26, 2025</p> <p>CMS has published a new list of <u>Special Focus Facilities</u> (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.</p> <p>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.</p>

	<p>This is important information for consumers – particularly as they consider a nursing home.</p> <p>What can advocates do with this information?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. <p>Massachusetts facilities listed (updated)</p> <p>Newly added to the listing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salem Rehab Center, Salem https://www.adviniaicare.com/adviniaicare-salem/ Nursing home inspect information: https://projects.propublica.org/nursing-homes/homes/h-225644/ • Fall River Healthcare https://www.nextstephc.com/fallriver Nursing home inspect information: https://projects.propublica.org/nursing-homes/homes/h-225723/ <p>Massachusetts facilities which have graduated from the program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 • Somerset Ridge Center, Somerset https://somersetridgerehab.com/ Nursing home inspect information: https://projects.propublica.org/nursing-homes/homes/h-225747 • Tremont Healthcare Center, Wareham https://thetremontrehabcare.com/ Nursing home inspect information: https://projects.propublica.org/nursing-homes/homes/h-225488/ <p>Massachusetts facilities that are candidates for listing (months on list)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AdviniaCare Newburyport (13) https://www.adviniaicare.com/adviniaicare-country-center/ Nursing home inspect information: https://projects.propublica.org/nursing-homes/homes/h-225332 • Brandon Woods of New Bedford (1) https://brandonwoodsnewbedford.com/ Nursing home inspect information: https://projects.propublica.org/nursing-homes/homes/h-225264/ • Cape Cod Post Acute, Brewster (9)
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	<p>https://capecodrehabhc.com/ Nursing home inspect information: https://projects.propublica.org/nursing-homes/homes/h-225667/</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Charwell House Health and Rehabilitation, Norwood (37) https://tinyurl.com/Charwell Nursing home inspect information: https://projects.propublica.org/nursing-homes/homes/h-225208Life Care Center of Merrimack Valley, Billerica (2) https://lcca.com/locations/ma/merrimack-valley/ Nursing home inspect information: https://projects.propublica.org/nursing-homes/homes/h-225546/Medway Country Manor Skilled Nursing & Rehabilitation, Medway (1) https://www.medwaymanor.com/ Nursing home inspect information: https://projects.propublica.org/nursing-homes/homes/h-225412Pine Knoll Nursing Center, Lexington, (3) https://www.longtermcentersgroup.com/About-Pine-Knoll-Nursing-Center-Rehab Nursing home inspect information: https://projects.propublica.org/nursing-homes/homes/h-225049/RegalCare at Glen Ridge (20) https://www.genesishcc.com/glenridge Nursing home inspect information: https://projects.propublica.org/nursing-homes/homes/h-225523West Newton Healthcare, West Newton (9) https://www.nextstephc.com/westnewton Nursing home inspect information: https://projects.propublica.org/nursing-homes/homes/h-225324/ <p>No longer operating</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">South Dennis Healthcare, South Dennis https://tinyurl.com/SpecialFocusFacilityProgram																												
Nursing Home Inspect	<p>ProPublica Nursing Home Inspect Data updated April 24, 2024 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). Massachusetts listing: https://projects.propublica.org/nursing-homes/state/MA Deficiencies By Severity in Massachusetts (What do the severity ratings mean?)</p> <table><tr><th>Deficiency Tag</th><th># Deficiencies</th><th># Facilities</th><th>MA facilities cited</th></tr><tr><td>B</td><td>284</td><td>198</td><td>Tag B</td></tr><tr><td>C</td><td>108</td><td>85</td><td>Tag C</td></tr><tr><td>D</td><td>7,496</td><td>1,469</td><td>Tag D</td></tr><tr><td>E</td><td>1,965</td><td>788</td><td>Tag E</td></tr><tr><td>F</td><td>656</td><td>317</td><td>Tag F</td></tr><tr><td>G</td><td>568</td><td>384</td><td>Tag G</td></tr></table>	Deficiency Tag	# Deficiencies	# Facilities	MA facilities cited	B	284	198	Tag B	C	108	85	Tag C	D	7,496	1,469	Tag D	E	1,965	788	Tag E	F	656	317	Tag F	G	568	384	Tag G
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Nursing Home Compare	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: <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. 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		
Data on Ownership of Nursing Homes	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.		
DignityMA Call Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 		
Access to Dignity Alliance social media	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		
Participation opportunities with	Workgroup	Workgroup lead	Email
	General Membership	Bill Henning Paul Lanzikos	bhenning@bostoncouncil.org paul.lanzikos@gmail.com
	Assisted Living	John Ford	jford@njc-ma.org

Dignity Alliance Massachusetts Most workgroups meet bi-weekly via Zoom. Interest Groups meet periodically (monthly, bi-monthly, or quarterly). Please contact group lead for more information.	Behavioral Health	Frank Baskin	baskinfrank19@gmail.com
	Communications	Lachlan Forrow	lforrow@bidmc.harvard.edu
	Facilities (Nursing homes and rest homes)	Jim Lomastro Arlene Germain	jimlomastro@comcast.net agermain@manhr.org
	Home and Community Based Services	Meg Coffin	mcoffin@centerlw.org
	Legislative	Richard Moore	rmoore8743@charter.net
	Legal Issues	Stephen Schwartz	sschwartz@cpr-ma.org
	Interest Group	Group lead	Email
	Housing	Bill Henning	bhenning@bostoncil.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
	Bringing People Home: Implementing the Marsters class action settlement	Website: https://marsters.centerforpublicrep.org/ Center for Public Representation 5 Ferry Street, #314, Easthampton, MA 01027 413-586-6024, Press 2 bringingpeoplehome@cpr-ma.org Newsletter registration: https://marsters.centerforpublicrep.org/7b3c2-contact/	
REV UP Massachusetts	REV UP Massachusetts advocates for the fair and civic inclusion of people with disabilities in every political, social, and economic front. REV Up aims to increase the number of people with disabilities who vote. Website: https://revupma.org/wp/ To join REV UP Massachusetts – go to the SIGN UP page .		
The Dignity Digest	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		
Note of thanks	Thanks to the contributors to this issue of <i>The Dignity Digest</i> : <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wynn Gerhardt• Dick Moore 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 The Dignity Digest or have questions or comments, please submit them to Digest@DignityAllianceMA.org.</i>		
<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.</i> <i>Our guiding principle is the assurance of dignity for those receiving the services as well as for those providing them.</i> <i>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> <i>Previous issues of The Tuesday Digest and The Dignity Digest are available at:</i> https://dignityalliancema.org/dignity-digest/			

For more information about Dignity Alliance Massachusetts, please visit www.DignityAllianceMA.org.