

Rep. Khan: *Fair Pay* critical to strengthen the sector

VIEW FROM THE HILL
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Tempus Unlimited helps people live independently

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Happy Holidays from the staff and board of the Providers' Council!

Best wishes for a safe and joyous holiday season with friends and family.

THE PROVIDER

Vol. 42 - No. 11

The Newspaper of the Providers' Council

December 2021

Council, members testify in support of fair pay

Providers' Council President and CEO Michael Weekes, state legislators and executives from several member organizations urged the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities to support the Council's Fair Pay for Comparable Work bill last month, arguing that it is critical to addressing the human services sector's workforce crisis.

Weekes told committee members that the pay disparity between community-based human services workers and state employees who do the same type of work has continually gotten worse in recent years – especially so since the start of the pandemic – making it “nearly impossible” for providers to recruit and retain high-quality workers.

“The state reported that they’re paying an average weekly wage of \$1,274 to state employees in the individual and family services area, while the community-based human services sector reported paying average wages of just \$548,” Weekes said. “This is a pay gap of more than 130 percent, which is an insurmountable challenge to our workforce crisis.”

Sen. Cindy Friedman, Rep. Kay Khan, Pathlight Executive Director Ruth Banta, Center for Human Development



The Providers' Council and its members testified on Fair Pay for Comparable Work legislation during a virtual legislative hearing in November. Clockwise from top left: Council President/CEO Michael Weekes; Pathlight Executive Director Ruth Banta; Viability President/CEO Colleen Holmes; and CHD President/CEO Jim Goodwin.

President/CEO Jim Goodwin and Viability President/CEO Colleen Holmes also testified in support of the bill, as well as several frontline workers.

Banta reiterated Weekes' frustration, explaining to the committee that despite being the primary purchaser of

human services, the state effectively undercuts the hiring efforts of community-based nonprofits while simultaneously asking more of them.

She even noted that over the previous 18 months, four of Pathlight's

FAIR PAY, see page 7

Senate tees up workforce funds; debate continues on ARPA bill

Human services workers and organizations could see \$55 million in state support for student loan repayment, as well as recruitment and retention funding, if part of the Senate's \$3.8 billion American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding package is included in the Legislature's final spending plan.

The funding – present in the Senate version of its budget at line item 1599-2027 – would allocate \$30 million for student loan repayment for human services workers at community-based organizations that have contracts with the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, the Executive Office of Elder Affairs, the Department of Housing and Community Development and the Department of Early Education

ARPA, see page 7

Courts to have final say on federal vaccine mandate

In early November, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) announced that starting Jan. 4, companies with 100 or more employees would have to ensure their entire workforce be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 or have unvaccinated workers produce weekly negative test results.

The announcement came nearly two months after President Joe Biden first ordered sweeping federal vaccine requirements, as part of an effort to rein in the delta variant and to curb vaccine resistance across the country.

However, just days later, a three-judge panel of the Fifth U.S. Circuit Federal Court of Appeals granted an emergency stay of the new Emergency Temporary Standard (ETS) pending further judicial review.

As a result, the case will be consolidated in the U.S. 6th Circuit Court of Appeals, though the Supreme Court will likely have to get involved in order to resolve the legal questions. In the meantime, the Jan. 4 implementation date appears to be on hold.

At least 27 states filed lawsuits challenging the rule in several circuits, and a Justice Department spokesperson said in a statement that, “the OSHA emergency temporary standard is a critical tool to keep America's workplaces safe as we fight our way out of this pandemic. The Justice Department will vigorously defend this rule in court,” according to AP News.

Should the new requirements be upheld, they will apply over 84 million workers across the country, and or-

VACCINE, see page 8

Providers' eAcademy® gets credential revisions

Human Services Credential in Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities
INTRODUCTION TO HUMAN SERVICES AND PROFESSIONALISM

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A screenshot from the revised Providers' eAcademy®, which is undergoing a credential revision project to continue providing the highest quality content to its more than 52,000 learners.

Shortly before the coronavirus spread across the United States and upended everyone's lives, the Providers' Council's eAcademy team began partnering with subject matter experts across Massachusetts in 2020 to revise and update all of the courses in the Human Services Credentialing Program (HSCP).

Since the Council started the online education program just over 15 years ago – allowing human services providers to offer affordable learning and training opportunities to their

staffs – its popularity and utility has skyrocketed; to date, over 52,000 learners from more than 97 members are eAcademy registered learner organizations.

By updating the courses in the HSCP, which was designed to expand upon the direct support professional core competencies outlined by the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals

(NADSP), the Council would be providing its members with the highest quality products and services.

But when COVID-19 hit the project was put on hold, as the subject matter experts – i.e. human services CEOs and executive staff from Council members – had to focus on ensuring the safety and protection of clients and staff at their programs.

However, thanks to the widespread availability of vaccines, they were able to turn their attention back to the effort. In October and November, we released 11 revised courses in the Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

EACADEMY, see page 7



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PROVIDERS' NEWS AND NOTES

Nine Council members named to list of the Top 100 Women-Led Businesses in Massachusetts

Nine Providers' Council members were recently named to The Commonwealth Institute (TCI) and The Boston Globe's list of the Top 100 Women-Led Businesses in Massachusetts.

Specifically, **Northeast Arc** was ranked at number 8, **Ascentria Care Alliance** at number 32, **May Institute** at number 35, **Pine Street Inn** at number 47, **TILL Inc.** at number 53, **People Incorporated** at number 60, **Cardinal Cushing Centers** at number 66 and **Morgan Memorial Goodwill Industries** at number 68 and **Jewish Family & Children's Service** at number 74.

The complete ranking of the 100 businesses was released during a virtual TCI awards ceremony on Nov. 5 and published in the Nov. 7 Women & Power issue of *The Boston Globe Magazine*.

Key Program taps Mello to replace retiring Lyttle

The Framingham-based **Key Program, Inc.** announced in November that it had selected Tammy Mello as the next president of the organization. Mello had previously served as executive director of the Children's League of Massachusetts for the previous four years. Key board chair Edward Feldstein noted Mello "has extensive experience in the field, with particular interest in child welfare and domestic violence initiatives."

Mello will replace Bill Lyttle, who is retiring from the Key Program at the end of 2021 after 46 years of leadership. Feldstein added his "passion,

knowledge and experience will be sorely missed."

Kennedy-Donovan Center names Morgan new President and CEO

The **Kennedy-Donovan Center** (KDC), a Foxboro-based nonprofit that provides support to people with developmental delays, disabilities and other family challenges, announced in late October that human services leader Lisa Morgan had been named President and Chief Executive Officer.

Morgan, who has dedicated her career to improving programs and services for people with disabilities and the most vulnerable, brings more than 28 years of experience in the nonprofit sector, including managing a wide array of programs for people with disabilities in Montreal, Baltimore, Atlanta and in Virginia.

"I am thrilled to be joining the highly skilled and dedicated team at Kennedy-Donovan Center. I look forward to working with the staff and board to build upon existing services and move the mission forward," Morgan said.

Mooney named next Executive Director of On The Rise

On The Rise, a Cambridge-based nonprofit that works with women and trans/nonbinary individuals to move through homelessness, announced in late October that Delphene Mooney has been named as its next executive director.

Charyti Reiter, former director of programs, has been serving as interim executive director and will continue in that role until Mooney

takes over in January.

"Delphene is an extremely effective relationship-builder and leader in fundraising and community engagement. Her strategic thinking and experience working with diverse people and perspectives to achieve shared goals are a huge asset to the organization. On The Rise is lucky to have her leadership as we enter a new chapter focused on creating values-driven impact in our community," said Josh Gerber, board chair of On The Rise.

Pine Street Inn raises \$51m in capital campaign, surpassing goal

Pine Street Inn, a Boston nonprofit that is New England's largest homeless services organization, announced on Nov. 1 that it completed a capital campaign, raised \$51 million in a capital campaign to support creation of new housing, beating its \$50 million goal.

The Key Moments campaign, announced in September 2019 as part of the organization's 50th anniversary, was the largest fundraising initiative to date for Pine Street Inn.

"Pine Street Inn is beyond grateful for the extraordinary show of support from so many individuals, corporations and foundations," said President and Executive Director Lyndia Downie. "Not only did the campaign exceed its goal, it was completed a year early – and during a pandemic.

In addition to creating 200 new housing units, the campaign will provide funds for repairs and improvements to existing housing units, and will establish a source of permanent funding for supportive services.

Organizational merger forms RFK Community Alliance

A little over a year after announcing plans to merge their two organizations, the **Doctor Franklin Perkins School** and **Robert F. Kennedy Children's Ac-**

tion Corps announced their new logo and name – **RFK Community Alliance** – at their joint Annual Meeting on Nov. 3.

The new logo modernizes Perkins' longtime blossom flower logo.



"The impact of these organizations is already substantial," President and CEO Michael Ames said in a statement. "The merger makes us both stronger. With more reach and resources now available, we have the opportunity to better serve the people in our care and the staff we employ. We are better together, especially in the face of rapid and often unpredictable change. We are excited to see what the future holds for RFK Community Alliance."

Old Colony YMCA raises a record \$610K at October gala

Old Colony YMCA, a Brockton-based nonprofit that is one of the largest human service providers in southeastern Massachusetts, announced in late October that it had raised \$610,000 at its annual gala, the highest amount raised for a single event in the organization's history.

The funds will support scholarships for the nonprofit's summer camp, child care and memberships, as well no-cost programs like Livestrong at the YMCA for cancer survivors, Y-Ability for kids with differing abilities, the Y Market's Food Distribution initiative and more.

"This event would not be nearly the success that it is without a committed, driven group of volunteers," said President and CEO Vinnie Marturano. "The efforts of these volunteers, in tandem with our staff, energize the entire planning and fundraising process."



Tammy Mello



Lisa Morgan



Delphene Mooney

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PROVIDER PROFILES

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About the Agency

Tempus Unlimited, Inc. is a private, nonprofit corporation, which is overseen by a Board of Directors. In June of 1952, the agency was incorporated as Cerebral Palsy of the South Shore with the stated purpose of providing rehabilitative and related services for developmentally disabled children, adults and persons with neurological dysfunction. In 1955, the agency opened the first school program for children with Cerebral Palsy in the United States at the Furnace Brook School in Quincy.

In 1987, the agency expanded its programs to further meet the needs of an underserved population of adults with developmental disabilities. A Supportive Living Program and a Personal Care Program were established to allow adults to live as independently as possible in their own homes and avoid institutionalization. In 1998, the agency started providing Fiscal Intermediary Services. Over the past ten years the agency has also developed Adult Foster Care and Employment Programs, along with a variety of therapeutic programs.

In 2017, our name was changed from Cerebral Palsy of Massachusetts to Tempus Unlimited to better reflect our mission to serve all. Tempus Unlimited, Inc. exists to provide a continuum of services that supports the effort of children and adults with disabilities to live as independently as possible in the least restrictive environment. The agency annual budget is now more than \$1 billion.

Opportunities for independence



At left, Adrianna receives Hippotherapy at a farm in Holliston; at right, Gretchen received a summer job through the Pre-Ets program at her high school.

Tempus Unlimited's programs are based on its mission of allowing individuals to live as independently as possible in the least restrictive environments. It focuses on a person-centered approach to support self-direction, planning, empowerment and, ultimately, independence.

The Fiscal Intermediary Program for the MassHealth PCA Program is Tempus Unlimited's largest. We serve over 25,000 consumers by helping individuals handle the financial paperwork involved in employing a PCA, working with Personal Care Management (PCM) Agencies, Senior Care Options (SCO), Consumer Directed Care (CDC) Agency, Veterans to Independence Plus (VIP) and Private Pay. This year the agency has been awarded the state contract to become the single Fiscal/Employer Agent (F/EA) for Massachusetts and will serve over 47,000 consumers beginning January 1, 2022. In addition, in collaboration with HHAExchange, Tempus Unlimited has been awarded the contract to provide F/EA services to all three Managed Care Organizations in Pennsylvania's Community HealthChoices program. The agency is currently recognized statewide and nationally as a leader in the F/EA arena.

The PCM Program helps over 6,500 individuals with disabilities across Massa-

chusetts live more independent lives, and provides skills training and clinical evaluation for consumers. Be it bathing, grooming, dressing or helping with medications, PCAs give consumers the help they need to remain in their own homes or even move out of restrictive living situations.

Adult Foster Care is a MassHealth funded program that provides in-home support to qualified individuals. Eligible individuals must be 16 years of age or older and need assistance with activities of daily living provided by a live-in caregiver.

The Supported Living Program, funded by MRC and DDS, helps adults with physical and developmental disabilities live independently in their own homes and apartments, throughout Southeastern Massachusetts.

The Employment Program, funded by MRC and DDS, helps empower adults and high school students with physical and developmental disabilities prepare for and find individual job placements in the community.

The Social, Recreational & Therapeutic Programs include school based Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Augmentative Communication Support Programs. In addition, Tempus Unlimited offers Therapeutic Horseback Riding through partnerships with local horse farms throughout Massachusetts.

Executive Leadership

Larry Spencer joined the agency in August 1992 as the Chief Financial Officer and served in that capacity until July 1, 2012. His responsibilities were upgraded to CFO/Fiscal Intermediary Director in 1998 when the agency was awarded a Fiscal Intermediary contract by MassHealth. When Spencer was promoted by the board of directors in 2012 to lead the agency, he retained the FI Director role in addition to the responsibilities as the new Chief Executive Officer.

Under his direction, the FI Program has grown from 800-plus consumers at the start of services to more than 25,000 consumers today. This year Tempus Unlimited has been awarded the state contract to become the single Fiscal/Employer Agent for Massachusetts and will serve over 47,000 consumers beginning January 1, 2022.

Spencer is a 1984 graduate of Fitchburg State College with a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration (Accounting) and has spent his whole career in nonprofit finance and administration. He has twice been invited to speak at the National Applied Self-Direction Conference. During the past nine years, the agency has grown all of its programs and has added new ones, such as Adult Foster Care and Employment Services. In addition, Spencer has continued to seek ways to grow the agency to provide increased and improved services for people with disabilities, especially important services that are not funded by state agencies.



Larry Spencer

SALUTING THE CARING FORCE

Candeloro hailed as 'best of the best'

Robert Candeloro has worked as a maintenance technician at Mainstay Supportive Housing and Homecare since June 2017. He's a front-line worker who provides critical support to its eight Boston area supportive housing programs.

Mainstay is a nonprofit organization headquartered in Newton that operates fifteen supportive housing programs across Massachusetts. It provides homes and support to 300 individuals and families every day, including people who have experienced homelessness, the elderly and people with disabilities.

"We own housing and we provide human services, so we need experts in both of these disciplines to achieve our mission," said Mainstay President Larry Oaks. "Bob is without a doubt one of our most valuable experts."

Oaks said that maintenance technicians play a really important role on their team, responding during off hours, weekends and overnights when residents have critical maintenance issues that cannot wait, as well as keeping the supportive housing clean and

safe.

"They are our first responders, and Bob Candeloro is the best of the best," Oaks said.



Candeloro is a critical part of Mainstay's success.

Candeloro's supervisor, Senior Property Manager Ron Quimby, added that he "stepped up and almost single-handedly kept our maintenance department afloat" in the last year, in spite of the coronavirus pandemic and Mainstay's severe staffing shortage.

Mainstay residents also greatly appreciate the job Candeloro does every day.

Tenant Karen-Leslie Easton said that he, "always does an excellent job after arriving in a timely manner, fixes things very quickly and is respectful. He doesn't leave a mess behind."

Why does Candeloro work for a supportive housing agency? He said that it's all about knowing that he's making a difference by helping individuals in need, many of whom are not able to do things for themselves.

Prior to coming to Mainstay four and half years ago, Candeloro spent 30 years as a handyman in the property management field.

Shea 1 team lauded for tireless work

Walnut Street Center, Inc. has operated its Shea Road 1 residence since 1982, and over the years the home has changed many times to meet the needs of residents. Today, the home is fully accessible and houses four adults with medical and behavioral needs.

The Shea 1 team – comprised of Direct Support Professionals Margaret Enganga, Niquase Noubou, Fritzner Cadet, Eddie Gawungu and May Rajab – most recently experienced great success with a resident named Susan.

Susan is a woman that has been living at the home for a little over two years, and despite being spirited, she has several challenges that make communication difficult. Since she moved in, staff and our clinical team have struggled with severe self-injurious behavior that often resulted in hospitalization. In fact, it was not unusual for Susan to go back and forth to the Emergency Room multiple times in a

week.

However, this amazing team worked with the center's clinical department, engaged in trial and error, listened to the resident and each other, implemented multiple plans, changed the environment, weathered medication adjustments and basically did everything they could. WSC is happy to report that after more than two years, the team is seeing positive results. Since writing this piece, Susan has been hospital-free for the last six weeks and counting. The Shea 1

team made what seemed impossible happen.

Enganga, Noubou, Cadet, Gawungu and Rajab make up a dynamic group of personalities and bring unique approaches to residential supports. Every day they work tirelessly to ensure that residents are participating in activities that make their lives more meaningful. WSC, as well as Susan and her family, cannot thank them enough.



The Shea 1 team – comprised of Margaret Enganga, Niquase Noubou, Fritzner Cadet, Eddie Gawungu and May Rajab – goes to great length for their residents.

EDITORIAL



Michael Weekes
President / Publisher

Gratitude requires action too

Maya Angelou – renowned author, playwright, poet, advocate for humanity and one of the nation’s greatest beacons for social and racial justice – left a rich legacy full of pearls of wisdom following her death in 2014. They are the pearls that I frequently refer to, as they aptly frame what the Council’s founder and friend, Gerry Wright, calls “naming the real,” which is the indomitable truth that is clearly before us but often is shrouded in obfuscation and misinformation – or ignored to thwart the efforts of those seeking social justice.

As I place pen to paper during this holiday season, the “real” that is too often forgotten or not fully appreciated is the tremendous value human services provides all of us: protecting the most vulnerable, empowering those on the margins and creating opportunities for many. And for that, we – clients, residents, guests, consumers, participants, staff, family members and even our communities – should be thankful and have a debt of gratitude.

One of Angelou’s classic pearls is “When you have an attitude of gratitude, you wake up saying thank you.”

“When you have an attitude of gratitude, you wake up saying thank you.”

– *Maya Angelou*

In this all too fast-paced nation, where our political and social divisions often breed indifference, contempt and hate, there are thousands of people in human services that are making a difference in the lives of countless others, with virtually no regard for their political bend, wealth or social status. While they may be politically agnostic in the smaller sense, they realize that we exist in a nation that more often cares about individual politics (with a Big P), like privilege, power and prejudice, and less about peace, philanthropy and progressive policies.

Fortunately, there is a committed community of human services supporters. The Caring Force, for instance, is primarily composed of selfless essential workers who sacrifice their health, safety, comfort and – unfortunately – earning potential to help those experiencing hunger, homelessness, illness, abject poverty and other limitations that prevent them from reaching their full potential. And today, we can do more than *speaking* gratitude, albeit important and relevant. We must *support* them with wages and benefits to retain them and hopefully attract others to this noble profession.

Over the past few months, we’ve introduced some of them to you: Jamaica Lassegue of Brockton Area Arc, Johnathan Jamieson of Mental Health Association, Belisa Rodrigues of Roxbury Youthworks, Vera Carducci of NFI Massachusetts and Cameisah Taylor-Mitchell of Pathlight. They and their colleagues were highlighted for going above and beyond the call of

duty and they do it at a great personal sacrifice, just like some of their 100,000 plus colleagues.

If you want to know what we mean about pay disparity, here are some numbers; according to the state ES-202 data, which compiles wages and salaries for professions through the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, state employees in the individual and family services area are paid an average weekly wage of \$1,274, while community-based human services workers who have similar roles are paid an average weekly wage of just \$548. In testimony that we provided the legislature we noted, “*This is a pay gap of more than 130 percent, which is an insurmountable challenge in our workforce crisis.*”

We have a few recommendations to correct this disparity:

1. Pass the Council’s House Bill 237 and Senate Bill 105 – *An Act relative to Fair Pay for Comparable Work*. It would provide the state with five years to phase out the pay disparity and not relegate some community-based workers to near poverty levels. This is a form of wage

discrimination that must end.

2. Pass the Council’s House Bill 266 and Senate Bill 120 – *An Act to establish a Loan Repayment Program for Human Services Workers*. These lower paid professionals have college loan debts that are difficult to meet on their wages. This bill will provide support and serve as a means of retention as well.

3. Incorporate the Senate language in the forthcoming Conference Committee report related to American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) spending and provide \$55 million for human services staff.

4. Support The Collaborative’s request for \$174 million in ARPA funds to provide a supplemental boost to human services workers annually over the next four years. In our judgment, no community mandated to provide the “safety net” for our residents is more deserving.

5. Work with the provider community to make sure the top four items are implemented fairly and effectively.

So there you have it. During this Thanksgiving season, it is important to provide a special note of gratitude to this essential workforce. While sincerely delivered words are very important, passage of these items will be acts of gratitude that will be welcomed throughout the community. Let’s take a big leap for justice with an *attitude of gratitude* and honor this predominantly women-based workforce with “the real” – by supporting them fairly and adequately.



Thank You Essential Workers!
We appreciate your contributions every day to building a stronger Commonwealth for all residents!



Have an idea for a Viewpoint from Across the State?

Want to highlight your organization or an employee with a Provider Profile or Salute?

Contact Stefan at sgeller@providers.org



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Auto part theft a major concern for human services organizations

By Shannon Leary

In mid-October, the staff of Employment Options in Marlborough arrived at work to discover that the catalytic converters had been stolen from seven of our program vehicles, rendering them inoperable. We partner with the MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA) in Framingham to fulfill our contracts, providing transportation to our Clubhouse members as well as fee-for-service contracts for the Department of Developmental Services (DDS).

Employment Options' mission is to empower individuals and families in mental health recovery to thrive in their communities. Our transportation provides our 100 plus members with the means to search for and maintain jobs, attend medical and psychiatric appointments and come to the Clubhouse for the social and advocacy aspects so crucial to their recovery. Additionally, our contracts provide DDS consumers with a means to attend their daily programs. In other words, the theft disrupted people's well-being and schedules and impacted our finances, through both costly repairs and lost revenue.

Thefts of catalytic converters have skyrocketed in the US in recent years, from an average of 108 incidents per month in 2018 to **2,347 in December 2020**, according to the National Insurance Crime Bureau. This statistic was quite shocking to us and we were unaware that other local businesses and schools had recently been targeted. Unfortunately, we did not have a security camera system in place. The Marlborough Police Department was immediately responsive, but, due to the lack of monitoring cameras, have not yet come up with any leads.

We learned that other area businesses experienced similar thefts and the problem is occurring nationwide, due to the precious metal contents contained in the converters. We have since completed the installation of a full camera monitoring system. Another suggestion from the police department was to work with the city and other area businesses to obtain overnight parking in a more traveled area, something that any vulnerable agency could consider.

The immediate impact from this theft was truly devastating. However, the

bright side has been the overwhelming support of our partners and donors in the community, once again highlighting how crucial a nonprofit's supporters are to its success. Marlborough Police have been strong supporters of our mission over the years and were very helpful in working through this theft with us.

MWRTA also provided us with loaner vehicles, which allowed us to get up and running very quickly and limited both our loss of revenue and the breakdown in crucial services; they have been an absolutely incredible partner to our agency.

In addition, Colonial Ford in Marlborough was extremely helpful in obtaining parts and repairing our vehicles as quickly as possible. The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) MetroWest, a longtime partner of Employment Options, made a generous donation to offset the cost of repairs, and we received donations from a number of private citizens as well.

It has been extremely uplifting to receive this support and to know that Employment Options' goal – to inspire people living with mental illness to reclaim their lives by discovering their own potential, skills and gifts through employment, education and advocacy programs – is one that continues to gain understanding and support throughout our community.

I am proud to say that the support we received from our own staff and members was equally inspiring. Our tireless Director of Programs and Services, Liz Gulachenski, surpassed her normal juggling skills, and our Clubhouse staff helped by transporting members in their personal vehicles.

Additionally, we have a strong board that was very supportive in backing the immediate installation of a camera system and in sharing our feelings of outrage that this crime unduly affected so many of our members and consumers. I know that the strength of our members, staff, board members, community partners and supporters will continue to carry Employment Options forward.

Shannon Leary is the executive director of Employment Options.

Honoring World AIDS Day 2021: Equitable Access, Everyone's Voices

By Raymond Josue Rodriguez

In 2015, daily feelings of fatigue and sickness shattered my denial; my substance use had spiraled out of control. One day, while sleeping on my parents' sofa, a syringe fell out of my pocket, along with the secrets I had been carrying. I went to get tested for HIV and received a positive diagnosis.

This year's World AIDS Day, Ending the HIV Epidemic: Equitable Access, Everyone's Voices, reflects my personal and professional journey with HIV.

As an Afro-Latinx gay man, I have first-hand experience with inequitable access to treatment. In response to a recent substance use relapse, I returned to treatment. Among 30 Latinx high-risk men, I was the only person who knew about Pre-exposure Prophylaxis or PrEP, the daily medication that has been proven to reduce transmission by more than 90%.

None of the others knew about PrEP, had discussed their sexual health with a healthcare provider or knew how to access it. PrEP is not a new HIV prevention strategy, but somehow it has not been readily made available to my peers. There are many contributing factors to the under-prescribing of PrEP among Latinx.a.o.e people.

The Latinx.a.o.e, culture reinforces the shame and stigma associated with HIV. Men who have sex with men are driven to secrecy, lacking family or social support.

The combination of conservative religious beliefs and a machismo attitude prevent open, practical, client-centered conversations between Latinx men and their providers. The connection between trauma, substance use and sexual risk is often overlooked. The responsibility rests on the patient to assert their needs rather than discussing them in a non-judgmental, trauma-informed way. Ultimately, the convergence of these factors results in Latinx men lacking practical risk-reduction tools like PrEP.

Achieving equitable access requires providers to understand the unique as-

pects of Latinx.a.o.e culture that keep men like me out of care. Training that reduces provider bias and increases comfort and understanding of risk-taking behaviors must be provided. While in substance use treatment, I observed that many of my peers were more comfortable disclosing their sexual and substance use risk behaviors to one another than to staff.

As a person living with HIV and working in HIV prevention, I have learned that working towards equitable access requires my voice and the voices of others that often go unheard. We must counter shame and stigma with our powerful truths. We must build a community that affirms the identities of all Latinx.a.o.e individuals, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. We must demand more from our providers and ensure that our experiences are reflected in the people who are treating us. I am a one of a privileged few who receive medical care that lifts me and honors my identities. My providers do not just hear my voice, they partner with me to amplify it. They welcome me to the table as an equal and support my role as an advocate, mentor and provider in the community.

State data indicates that between 2016 and 2018, Black and Latinx.a.o.e individuals were seven times and four times more likely, respectively, to contract HIV than their white counterparts. During that same time period, 35% of new infections occurred among people born outside the United States.

In Massachusetts, new infections have been reduced to approximately 500 per year. We have more tools than ever to fight HIV, yet new infections are not being reduced at a proportional rate. Scientific advances have brought a possible end to HIV into focus. This possibility will extend far out on the horizon if we do not lift the most marginalized voices to ensure equitable access.

Raymond Josue Rodriguez is the health navigator for Justice Resource Institute.

Helping our friends at Mass and Cass – and all who need housing, support

By Ted Waterman

From what we read in the papers, see on the street and hear from the City, we have reached the tipping point in the so-called Mass and Cass area of Boston.

Hundreds of people living in tents on the street were told enough is enough and they must go, but they can have housing and services if they want them. We've seen images of workers packing up belongings, taking down and throwing away tents, talking to the individuals who call the Mass and Cass area – also known as the Newmarket area – home.

Nearby business owners are disheartened by the chaos they see around them, the damage to their properties and the unsafe and unclean conditions created in the area, with so many living in tents without adequate access to water or proper bathrooms.

Boston is promising action – workers are speaking with the individuals living on the street. Some are being transported to jails and being held on old charges. Some are accepting local hotel rooms as

they are moved off the street. Some are accepting offers of help and going into detox or other appropriate levels of care. Still, others in the news are adamant that they will not go into any housing or shelter, because they feel unsafe in those settings and they feel a community and togetherness in the environment they have created. Winter is coming and life on the streets will become even more unsafe.

Meanwhile, those in treatment at places like Hope House and other residential care facilities – people who desperately want permanent and stable housing – wait years for housing opportunities. They suffer under what seems like interminable delays, disfunction and a lack of resources in their searches; delays and lost paperwork are all too common and frustrating. COVID only made this more challenging. Of course, there are some bright lights in the Boston Housing system, as we work with individual administrative workers who care deeply and want to help. But they too are struggling with

the weaknesses in an overly bureaucratic, paper-driven, waitlist-driven system, and so the delays, frustrations and disappointments continue. We believe the new mayor will make good on her promise to address the issues with housing and we all look forward to those improvements.

As our clients watch the news and see the efforts being made in our area to get housing for the people living on the streets, they are hopeful that the opening of housing opportunities will also pass to them, men who have worked so hard to get back on their feet and rejoin society.

It is a terrible thing to think we must choose between one person and another to determine who deserves proper housing. All of us must have housing if we are to feel safe and live our best lives. Of course, decisions must be made and services have guidelines, but I think most all of us agree that every person needs a stable living situation. Services and supports, engagement in individualized care and planning are imperative.

We hear stories of people waiting for years on lists, meanwhile surfing on couches or imposing on friends and family, if they are lucky. We hear about low-threshold, permanent housing where there are no expectations of treatment or adherence to programmatic supports. In some cases we are told this can work and people are successful, we hear in many others it is chaotic and ultimately results in failure and eviction, and the person is left with a deeper shame and sense of failure.

Those of us in treatment services are biased toward the need for services prior to moving someone into an independent living situation. We believe that clear supports and expectations are imperative to ensuring a person remains housed, and addressing the underlying issues that lead to their being without a home. This may not guarantee success, but we believe it increases their chances exponentially. Housing-first proponents argue that you need to get people into hous-

ing, let them settle in and then develop the supports around their wants and needs. Of course, there are positive elements to both, and I think they should co-exist and be part of the array of services available to those in need.

A rising tide lifts all boats. Let us hope the rising awareness of the ravages of addiction and the impacts of living on the street are helping people who don't work in treatment services see that people need our help and care. Our brothers and sisters are suffering. This is not a one size fits all solution. No-one should imagine solutions are easy or quick. All of us should know that it takes hard work, shared efforts and tireless action where we can retain the goodness that comes from feeling part of a community with the benefits of wellness and true well-being. Only in this way will support our friends in the Mass and Cass area and, in doing so, help us all.

Ted Waterman is the president and CEO of Hope House Addiction Services.



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1/20

A VIEW FROM THE HILL

A commentary from a legislator on human services



Fair Pay for Comparable Work critical to strengthening sector

By Rep. Kay Khan

In these unprecedented times, as we make every effort to manage the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, elected officials are busier than ever. In the House, we meet with the Speaker's office in caucuses, gather virtually with colleagues for legislative sessions, meet with constituents and attend hearings, budget meetings and webinars, all while becoming more aware of pressing issues facing the Commonwealth.

This fall, House and Senate members heard testimony during six public hearings, organized by Ways and Means Committees, on how to best invest federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds coming to Massachusetts, be it in housing, hospitals, healthcare, human services, education or workforce development to support workers, industries, and communities hurt by the pandemic.

My commitment to serving our most vulnerable residents – through my roles as former House Chair of the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities, a current member of the Joint Committees on Public Health, Elder Affairs, the House Committee on Post Audit and Oversight, as well as through my appointment to the Permanent Commission on the Status of Persons with Disabilities by Speaker Ronald Mariano – has never wavered.

Since 1995, I have advocated for equitable access to public health and mental health services for people with disabilities, and am pleased to report that a resolve that I filed with Rep. Liz Miranda and Sen. Becca Rausch passed at the end of our most recent session; it creates a special commission to gather data and make recommendations to address racial inequities for women of color dying of pregnancy-related causes.

I am hopeful that other bills I am currently working on will be given strong consideration, such as a data task force, which focuses on the Department of Children and Families; legislation to create a child cabinet like the previous Office for Children; and improvements to the home health workforce.

Behavioral health is always my priority, and now more than ever we must improve access to mental health services. Emergency rooms continue

to crowd with children, in some cases for months, even if beds are available. We lack the workforce to address this issue.

Finally, I'm grateful for the opportunity to highlight **H.237/S.105, An Act Relative to Fair Pay for Comparable Work**, of which I am a primary sponsor along with Sen. Cindy Friedman.

This bill would eliminate the pay disparity that exists between human services workers employed by private community-based providers and state employees who hold similar job titles and perform similar work.

Despite being the largest purchaser of human services from community-based nonprofits, the Commonwealth is making it increasingly difficult for them to recruit and retain qualified workers, due to the pay disparity.

Without a solution to the workforce crisis in the human services sector, an increasing number of jobs will go unfilled, leading to deterioration in the quality of services delivered to Massachusetts' most vulnerable residents.

The bill recommends how to strengthen recruitment and retention of human services workers at private, community-based nonprofits by fully eliminating the pay disparity by July 2027.

I respectfully ask for your help with this important legislation.

Massachusetts has been a leader in public health for decades, however there is still much to do for our health-care workers, our most vulnerable residents, the homeless, those who have serious mental health needs, those suffering from addictions and everyone in the Commonwealth. This once-in-a-generation opportunity with ARPA funding could help move us forward; the future is now.

Rep. Kay Khan represents the Eleventh Middlesex District (Newton) and is a member of the Joint Committees on Elder Affairs and Public Health, as well as the House Committee on Post Audit and Oversight.



Representative Kay Khan

The opinions expressed in A View from the Hill and Viewpoints from Across the State are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of the Providers' Council or its members.

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FAIR PAY: Bill would nix pay disparity

Continued from Page 1

nurses had left to work at state-operated homes, primarily because her organization is funded by the state at a rate of \$31 per hour for a nurse, but the state pays its own nurses between \$34 and \$57 an hour. Pathlight serves people with developmental disabilities and autism in Western Massachusetts.

"We just really want the level playing field for wages," Banta said. "We know we've got the difference in benefits and all these other things, but to have such wage discrepancies for the very similar work just really puts us at a disadvantage with the state, who is our primary purchaser. They're our regulators and our competitors."

Goodwin added that he feels "that we're a farm system for the state of Massachusetts, and that all of our critical managers are often picked off largely because of the pay disparity."

Holmes noted Viability has a 26 percent turnover rate, adding 57 staff members had left the organization for

higher paying jobs over the last two years. Due to difficulties in hiring, she noted that 27 individuals are currently waitlisted for services – and that's just in four of Viability's programs.

Friedman said that a recent survey done by the Association of Developmental Disability Providers showed that nearly one-third of day habilitation providers reported having staff vacancy rates of over 40 percent, and more than 80 percent of respondents said they're maintaining program waitlists due to the inability to hire staff.

"Without a solution to this workforce crisis, an increasing number of jobs will go unfulfilled, leading to a deterioration in the quality of services delivered to Massachusetts' most vulnerable residents," Friedman said. "In fact, not only will the quality of the services deteriorate, they will not be available."

If ultimately passed as is, the bill – filed by Khan and Friedman – would prompt a detailed study of the issue and set a schedule to fully phase out the pay disparity by 2027.

EACADEMY: Final updates coming soon

Continued from Page 1

Developmental Disabilities credential at no additional cost for agencies participating in the program.

The credentialing program curriculum consists of core competency training in different service areas within the human services sector. This innovative program consists of seven credentials all credited by the NADSP for 14 CEUs.

These credentials enhance the skill sets of human services workers and give them the tools to deliver the best care possible to the communities and individuals they serve.

The credentials have been modernized and the content updated to reflect the most current technologies and mechanisms for supporting individuals in our sector. All modules will be available in both English and Spanish for learners with interactivity, reality-based scenarios and engaging visuals that enhance the learning experience.

Agencies can choose to assign these new courses individually to staff, or to assign them together through the Training Plan tool. Upon completion of the full credential, including the final exam, staff are eligible to receive a printed certificate from the Providers' Council, which is accredited by the NADSP.

The remaining six credentials will be released in the coming months. Topics include: Mental Health, Autism Spectrum Disorder; Child, Youth & Family Welfare Level 1; Child, Youth & Family Welfare Level 2; Substance Use and Addictive Disorder; and Leadership & Frontline Supervision.

The Providers' eAcademy, which includes the HSCP, is available to Providers' Council members only. For more information and to request a demonstration, contact Amanda Rheume at arheume@providers.org or 508.599.2242.

ARPA: Legislators hold out hope for passage prior to end of calendar year

Continued from Page 1

and Care. A board would be created to make determinations on program eligibility.

The line item also called for the creation of a \$25 million grant program to support the recruitment and retention of human services workers. The grant program would be administered by EOHHS and would begin seeking applications no later than March 1, 2022.

The Collaborative had sought loan repayment and recruitment and retention funding as part of its request to the Legislature. Providers' Council President and CEO Michael Weekes and other Collaborative members made the funding request to legislators while delivering testimony before the Joint Committee on Ways & Means in late September.

"Today, the workforce situation is perhaps as bad as ever; some programs have turnover rates that are at historic heights," Weekes said at the September hearing. "When essential staff are missing from human services, the safety and health of clients and residents are immediately at risk."

The House plan included different language at 1599-2027, omitting funding specifically for loan repayment for human services workers or for recruitment and retention initiatives.

Both plans also included \$500 million in premium pay for Massachusetts residents who worked in person during the pandemic and who are at or below 300 percent of the federal poverty level. Federal poverty level is determined by family size; a single person making under \$38,640 annually would be eligible, while a family of four would be eligible if their income was under \$79,500. Both plans also include \$500 million for the state's unemployment trust fund.

The Senate reached accord on its

ARPA spending package on Nov. 10, just 12 days after the House voted unanimously on its own package. The timing left a six-member Conference Committee only one week to negotiate a final package before the Legislature's deadline of Wednesday, Nov. 17 for the end of formal sessions for 2021.

While legislators did not reach a compromise by the deadline, legislators told the State House News Service (SHNS) they remained optimistic that a deal may be able to be reached by the end of the year. While major legislation may pass in informal sessions, any one legislator can raise an objection, blocking movement on a bill.

"Obviously, it doesn't end the discussion," House Ways & Means Chairman Aaron Michlewitz told SHNS, regarding pushing an agreement between chambers past the Nov. 17 deadline. "I think we're going to continue to negotiate beyond today because there's obviously a need to try to get this done as soon as possible."

His colleague, Senate Ways & Means Chairman Michael Rodrigues, added both sides would keep working toward a compromise, telling SHNS that legislators would "continue to roll up our sleeves and get this done as soon as possible."

The news service also reported that there is "uncertainty also about whether, under legislative rules, the appropriations bills will die at the start of the new annual session or carry over intact." The chamber passed a rule in 1995 that allowed all bills to be carried into the second year of a legislative session other than some appropriation bills. Michlewitz told SHNS that legislators would need to discuss the details of that with its legal counsel.



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What: **Nonprofit Workforce Crisis Regional Forum**
Including presenters from Connecticut, Massachusetts & Rhode Island

When: Monday, December 6

Time: 10 a.m. to noon

Presenters: All states are inviting community-based human services organizations and other nonprofits to present information about the workforce crisis. Legislators from the various states are also expected to present.

Where: Online via Zoom

Cost: Free

What: **Success as a New Supervisor**

When: Wednesdays – January 19 and January 26, 2022

Time: 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

About: Strong leaders take initiative, think strategically, empower others and set and carry out a vision. This training is for both current and newly promoted supervisors, as well as those considering stepping up to a supervisory position.

Presenters: Jim Ognibene, Visioneer Consulting

Where: Online via Zoom

Cost: Members \$140; Non-members \$200

Pre-registration for these events is required unless otherwise noted.

Please visit providers.org/events to learn more and register for the event you wish to attend.

Questions? Call 508.598.9800 or email Mesa Merritt at mmerritt@providers.org.

VACCINE: Nonprofits awaiting court rulings on vaccine mandate

Continued from Page 1

ganizations that fail to comply could face penalties of nearly \$14,000 per violation. Employees would need to receive either two doses of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine or one dose of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine by the deadline. And, in addition to submitting weekly negative test results, unvaccinated employees would need to wear face masks.

OSHA would also require businesses to provide paid time off for employees to get vaccines and sick leave to recover from side effects that prevent them from working.

According to the National Council of Nonprofits, the number of employees triggering coverage would be based on all employees, fulltime and part-time workers combined.

Employees working remotely or out-

doors would be counted for employer coverage purposes, but they would not necessarily be required to get vaccinated or tested if they do not come in contact with coworkers or customers.

Individuals who have certain medical conditions or sincerely held religious objections would not have to be vaccinated, but would still need to be tested and wear face coverings in group settings. Employers could require employees pay the costs of testing, except where other legal or collective bargaining obligations require otherwise.

The Biden administration has continually encouraged Americans to get vaccinated, saying that is the fastest way to end the pandemic, and says it is confident that the requirement will withstand legal challenges in part because its safety rules preempt state laws, according to AP News.



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