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Concerns, questions surround reopening
Procedures, safety and funding all concerns, leaders say

Massachusetts human service providers say they are proceeding carefully - with as many questions as answers - as they carefully plan to reopen programs and services shuttered more than two months ago by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Most Providers' Council members have been providing essential services for the duration of the pandemic, though many day programs and other community-based initiatives were halted in mid-March, when state officials issued stay-at-home orders and implemented social distancing recommendations. Gov. Baker announced plans on Monday, May 18 for a phased reopening of the Massachusetts' economy; many human services programs consider themselves part of phase 2, which, at the earliest, will begin sometime in mid-June.

July 1 is a general target date for when Katie Terino, executive director of House of Possibilities (HOPE), hopes her organization will be able to restart some services, even on a limited basis. Her organization quickly pivoted its day programs to remote classes on Google Classroom, which worked well when in-person programming was prohibited.

"We are working hard now to frame what reopening looks like for us and how we can be successful. We have lots



of questions and need more guidance from the state, but we are keeping safety concerns of our staff and our members at the forefront," she said.

HOPE's program offerings for 250 adults and children with developmental disabilities will change, depending on the results of a survey to members and families about which services and configurations would be most valuable, Terino said. HOPE will likely place a greater emphasis on outdoor activities, perhaps building new shelters at its facilities on the Stonehill College campus

in Easton.

"It will all be determined by what our members and their families say they need most from us," Terino said. One of her main concerns is the lack of clarity from the state on billing for remote services. HOPE has not been able to get reimbursement since March, and it needs the DDS funds to move forward. "We have been innovative, and we really need the state's support."

Jim Cassetta, president and CEO of Dorchester-based WORK Inc., said that

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Fed updates on unemployment, .org domain sale

The Providers' Council and the Massachusetts Nonprofit Network urged House Ways & Means Chairman Richard Neal in May to pass a technical correction to the CARES Act that would allow nonprofits to receive a credit, rather than a reimbursement, for COVID-19-related unemployment costs.

The May 8 letter to Neal's staff noted that "nonprofits have started receiving bills at a time when their revenue streams have been significantly disrupted," and it would create a financial hardship to force nonprofits that self-insure for unemployment to pay 100 percent of costs and wait on a 50 percent reimbursement to come at some point in the future.

The letter also urged full forgiveness for nonprofit organizations that self-insure for unemployment. "With layoffs occurring at unprecedented rates, bills landing at nonprofits, and a state UI trust that isn't in a positive to provide forgiveness, nonprofits in Massachusetts will need additional federal support to avoid devastating disruptions in programmatic services," MNN CEO Jim

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Rep. Moulton: Human services workers are our “heart and soul”

By U.S. Rep. Seth Moulton

Thank you for continuing to serve in the midst of such a challenging time. As a long-time member of my local YMCA in Salem, I have never had to look far to understand the importance of your work. You provide a steady hand to lift up those in need, and have done a remarkable job adapting to our rapidly changing reality in order to help to more people in more places

This is obviously a tough time to run a human services organization. Many of you lost revenue because of the shutdown, you've had to furlough staff, and you've watched as the stock market's uncertainty has caused donors to hold on to their money — chal-

lenges that were completely unexpected and are likely to stubbornly remain after the immediate crisis subsides. When the head of my local Y shared some of these challenges with me, I asked my team to find a solution

That's why we wrote the Save the Organizations that Serve (SOS) America Act with my colleague Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick in March. The SOS America Act is a relief plan to help you keep serving without having to worry about keeping the lights on. It calls for \$60 billion in emergency funding for nonprofits,



Rep. Seth Moulton

a universal charitable deduction to incentivize donations, and assurance that charitable nonprofits can access key small business relief programs. Over the course of this pandemic, this bill has rightly become a top priority for me and many of my colleagues, and many of you have joined me in pushing for relief.

Thanks to our work together, I am proud to announce that the most important parts of the SOS America Act were included in the HEROES Act, which the House passed a few days ago. The bill expands access to capital by setting aside specific PPP funding for nonprofits, including mid-sized nonprofits that were previously excluded from relief. It's a victory I share with all of you, but I recog-

nize we have more work to do. The bill still has to make it through the Senate, and I know that every day in the meantime, the financial pain you're feeling increases.

You're the heart and soul of the Commonwealth's communities, and I'm going to keep fighting for you. Thank you for all you've done to serve so many people who are counting on you in this pandemic — for providing decisive leadership at a time when it's been largely absent from the national stage. The work you do matters, and it is helping us get through this together. Keep it up!

U.S. Rep. Seth Moulton of Salem represents Massachusetts' 6th Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives.

PROVIDERS' NEWS AND NOTES

Berkshire AHEC names new executive director

Berkshire AHEC has named Gena DiSimoni Johnson as its new executive director. Johnson is an operations professional specializing in event production and grant writing. She began her career in live entertainment as a stage/production manager and previously served as the director of advanced technology development for a small defense company in southwestern Pennsylvania. Born and raised in Pittsfield, Johnson holds a degree in English from Westfield State College.



Gena DiSimoni Johnson

Berkshire AHEC, which celebrated its 40th anniversary last year, strives to reduce health inequities through training, public health, prevention and health promotion strategies. It is home to the Berkshire Tobacco-Free Community Partnership.

Louison House leader honored by nonprofit center

Kathy Keeser, executive director of **Louison House** in Pittsfield, was honored with an Executive Leadership award from the Nonprofit Center of the Berkshires.



Kathy Keeser

Berkshire Nonprofit Award honorees were recognized "for their outstanding commitment and contributions to the Berkshire community," the organization said.

JRI Names Ruiz to Its Board of Trustees

JRI, a Needham-based nonprofit provider of trauma-informed care to children and families in Massachusetts,

Rhode Island, and Connecticut, has announced the addition of Maria Carolina (Caro) Ruiz of Boston to its Board of Trustees.



Carolina (Caro) Ruiz

Ruiz, who serves as director of operations performance management at Tufts Health Plan, has been a leader in the Latino community, including past elected roles in the Association for Latino Professionals for America.

Council members awarded grants for COVID-19 critical services

The Boston Foundation, The Greater Lowell Community Foundation, MassHousing, the Harvard Pilgrim Foundation and The United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley, recently awarded nearly \$6 million to more than 250 Massachusetts nonprofits coping with the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic.

Among the grantees were more than twenty Council members, including: **Action for Boston Community Development, Bay Cove Human Services, Berkshire County Arc, Bridgewell, Cambridge Family and Children's Service, Cardinal Cushing, Casa Myrna, Children's Services of Roxbury, City Mission, Community Counseling of Bristol County, Community Teamwork, Dimock Community Health Center, Greater Lowell Community Teamwork, Hattie B. Cooper CC, Hildebrand Family Self-Help, Immigrants' Assistance Center, International Institute of NE, Jewish Family and Children's Service, Middlesex Human Service Agency, More Than Words, Northeast Arc, North Suffolk MH, Sojourner House, Victory Programs, Victory Human Serv-**

Berkshire ARC staff get highway high-five



Berkshire County Arc wanted to show heartfelt thanks during the COVID-19 crisis to its frontline human services workers throughout western Massachusetts. These billboards located in Pittsfield and Westfield are dedicated to their "incredible" staff, the agency's leaders said.

ices and Wayside Youth & Family Support Network.

Additional Council members receive COVID-19 grants awarded by regional foundations

Community foundations based in Danvers, Fitchburg, New Bedford, Springfield, and Worcester announced they have also recently awarded \$1.86 million in a new round of grants to support nonprofits in their service areas that are providing services to help mitigate the unfolding impacts of the coronavirus crisis.

Council members receiving grants include: **CENTRO, Gandara Mental Health Center, HMEA Inc., MLK Jr. Family Services, M.O. L.I.F.E, New North Citizens Council, Riverside Community Care, Safe Passage, ServiceNet, Seven Hills Behavioral**

Health and South Middlesex Opportunity Council and Survival Centers/Amherst Survival Center.

Mass. Service Alliance announces Commonwealth Corps interns

The Massachusetts Service Alliance, has selected 16 nonprofits across the state to host Commonwealth Corps interns for the 2020-2021 program year.

Council members who will be hosting an intern include: **More Than Words, Open Sky Community Services and International Institute of New England.**

Next year's host site partners are currently planning their programs and shifting Commonwealth Corps members' roles and responsibilities to address the lasting impact of the current pandemic on their communities, MSA said.



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PROVIDER PROFILES

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About the Agency

REACH Beyond Domestic Violence was founded in 1981 as an all-volunteer shelter and hotline. We now support 7,000 people each year in 27 communities north and west of Boston. REACH's acronym – **R**efuge, **E**ducation, **A**dvocacy, and **C**Hange – represents the keys to addressing both the symptoms and the causes of domestic violence.

Because REACH's services are provided free of charge, we rely on corporations, foundations, government contracts, and individual donors to support this important work. We have several contracts with the Department of Public Health, Massachusetts Office for Victim Assistance and receive local grant funding. We raise well over \$1 million each year from 115 private and corporate foundations, our annual gala and many generous donors.

Since our founding nearly 40 years ago, REACH has become a recognized leader in supporting survivors and preventing domestic abuse. Over the past ten years, the agency has tripled in size – in staff, budget, and the number of people served.

In 2017, REACH moved into new office space that has enabled significant growth to flourish. We created a warm, light-filled and welcoming environment for survivors and staff with confidential meeting rooms, a supervised play space for children while their parents are meeting with advocates and room to hold our trainings and community meetings.

Supporting survivors of domestic violence



Left: REACH staff members assisting a survivor move to safe housing. Right: staff of REACH attend one of the organization's frequent trainings



REACH's eight-room emergency shelter is a place of safety where survivors can catch their breath and begin the journey to recovery and independence. Ours was one of the first shelters in Massachusetts to welcome male survivors, parents with teenage sons, and LGBTQ survivors.

Our community-based advocacy program serves more than 300 survivors each year for whom shelter is not an option so they can access support without having to leave their homes and communities ties behind.

Our advocates provide assistance with safety planning, finding a job or housing, and accessing benefits. We accompany survivors to court, support them with legal issues and ease access to other resources to help families heal physically and emotionally.

REACH's hotline is answered 24/7 every day of the year. It is a resource for anyone experiencing abuse in an intimate relationship and a source of reliable help and information for their allies.

REACH believes strongly that the best way to eliminate domestic abuse is to prevent it from happening in the first place. Our education and prevention program is

at the forefront of this critical educational effort. We train first responders, medical professionals, social service agencies, businesses and corporations, faith organizations and middle, high school, and college students.

Last year, we conducted 538 training sessions with a total of 6,147 people, including 1,596 adults, 149 college students, and 4,402 middle and high school students.

REACH serves all survivors regardless of race, ethnicity, immigration status, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, religion or income level. The majority of our clients are women between the ages of 25 and 49, and 55% identify themselves as Hispanic.

Many survivors who work with REACH experience poverty and may have substance abuse and mental health issues.

The immigrant survivors we work with are especially underserved and often suffer disproportionately from the effects of domestic violence. They are more isolated, hesitant to contact law enforcement for fear of deportation and at the mercy of abusers who use that fear as a means to maintain control over the victim.

President & CEO

Twenty years ago, Laura R. Van Zandt joined the REACH Board of Directors while working in financial services.

She joined the staff in 2004, after a successful career at Wellington Management Company and Scudder Investments.



Laura Van Zandt

She holds a B.A. from Cornell University and a M.B.A. in finance from Boston College Carroll Graduate School of Management.

Van Zandt and her colleagues have led a successful capital campaign to double the capacity of the shelter, expanded REACH's prevention and community engagement programs and moved the organization into larger, accessible, and welcoming office space.

"Our collective knowledge, power, and compassion are needed in order to create lasting change," she said. "Changing social norms is necessary to dislodge the attitudes and behaviors that support the imbalances of power where domestic violence feeds."

"We are challenging ourselves to chart a course forward that will enable us to be here as we are needed and give us the opportunity to try new things while we continue to do what works."

SALUTING THE CARING FORCE

North Suffolk Early Intervention team joins together, pivots to telehealth

When the state-of-emergency order shut down all but essential services in the Commonwealth on March 10, the North Suffolk Mental Health Association Harbor Area Early Intervention team was in a bind.

The services they were providing to children from birth to age 3 and their families were more than essential, but they could no longer go into clients' homes.

"We quickly transitioned to telehealth in two weeks ... going from home visits with a young child and family within natural settings and daily routines, to interacting through a computer or phone screen" said Harbor Area EI Director Rachael Cracknell.

"The multi-disciplinary EI team is now also very focused on family support needs and resources, in addition to creating new developmental communication, motor, social, art, and music therapy interventions."

Many of the EI staff have been working remotely, but a core group has continued to work in the office



North Suffolk Mental Health Association's Harbor Area Early Intervention team meets via Zoom, using technology to meet the needs of the clients and consumers it serves during the COVID-19 pandemic.

or a hybrid schedule. This core site team of Community Services Manager Debbie Eccleston; Front Desk Billing Coordinator Liz McNealy and Indira Meza, Data Coordinator/Receptionist Damaris Meza; Child Care Coordinator Mariana Torres; EI Team Leaders Aliza Llovet and Brianna Micciche; and Rodolfo Gutierrez, Facilities, has

been instrumental in keeping the program going.

Working in some of the communities hardest hit by COVID-19, including Chelsea, East Boston and Revere, the families with infants and toddlers have been faced with a myriad challenges not the least of which is the stigma and worry of having the illness and for many the

fear of public charge if they accept public services.

All of the changes brought on by the pandemic have resulted in a 50-65 percent drop in revenues for EI programs, including NSMHA. And so, in addition to providing services, the EI team, with the 58 other EI programs across the state, has been advocating on Beacon Hill for supplemental funding to help these vital programs survive.

"We have built trusting relationships, and most of our families have continued to stay engaged with the program," said Cracknell, who is also the president-elect of the Massachusetts Early Intervention Consortium. "But the duration of services has been cut in half because parents with young children have so much on their plate right now."

Through it all, though, the North Suffolk EI team continues to come up with new and creative ways to provide their families with the mental health and developmental support they need now more than ever.

EDITORIAL



Michael Weekes
President / Publisher

Reopening with guideposts

As Massachusetts and the rest of the nation begins the process of reopening during this pandemic, I'm reminded of one of Governor Baker's most salient points: "We cannot move forward unless we commit to continuing to slow the spread."

His four-phase reopening plan primarily shaped by his 17-member Reopening Advisory Board — co-chaired by Lt. Governor Karyn Polito and Secretary of Housing and Economic Development Mike Keneally — was released on May 18. This thoughtful report was the result of testimony and presentations from 75 business groups and other entities representing over 112,000 businesses with over 2 million employees. The Providers' Council, with our friends at The Collaborative, presented to the RAB via Zoom on May 6 and is pleased to support recommendations that recognize the uniqueness and essential nature of our sector needs.

When this emergency unfolded many of us were consumed with thoughts on how to protect the thousands of people we serve, and the thousands employed performing in nearly 185,000 jobs that comprise our systems of care — our state's safety net for our at-risk residents.

The public could heed the advisory to stay at home, but this was not an option for thousands of employees who are part of state's *essential* work force, providing *essential* services to our most *essential* residents in care. While a few observers may not have immediately recognized our "essentiality," as much attention was focused on medical workers, undoubtedly, human service workers protecting vulnerable children, elders and others were, and would continue to be "open for business."

But some services like day programs that support those with a disability, early education providers offering childcare, family support services and others were required to temporarily close their doors, and for the protection of all they did. These were difficult decisions and now there are equally difficult decisions to reopen.

While the state's framework for reopening is a good one, its necessary to create human services sector specific approaches developed with the sector.

I submit that we need to have at least four guideposts to reopen, assuming that data, science and experiences support it. The four guiding principles are: gradual opening, provider input, embrace of creative change and adequate funding.

To start, plans for our sector to reopen must be gradual as the first of the guideposts. As I've said before, reopening will not be a "flip of the switch." Reopening must be thoughtful. For example, in opening day programs we must consider client transportation. Transporting clients in 15 passenger vans does not promote safe social distancing. Additionally, many of our staff rely on public transportation.

The MBTA and other mass transit systems must be fully operational, have flexible schedules, and be safe.

The second guidepost is to ensure and respect provider input. Our systems of care are sophisticated and have linkages with other systems. Sector providers should be included in the planning phase and involved in testing operational assumptions. For example, we have a workforce that is 80 percent female and are often single parents that need reliable, safe and convenient childcare. If the state's early education childcare system is not fully operational and flexible enough to address worker needs, then we diminish our reopening capability.

As our workforce is key to an optimal human services system, we must also include compensation that adequately recognizes the risks and responsibilities of the workforce. Pre COVID-19 salary levels do not reflect these responsibilities, skills and talents. Further, providers are requesting that mental health services be available for the workforce. Some have worked in settings with significant trauma and need additional support.

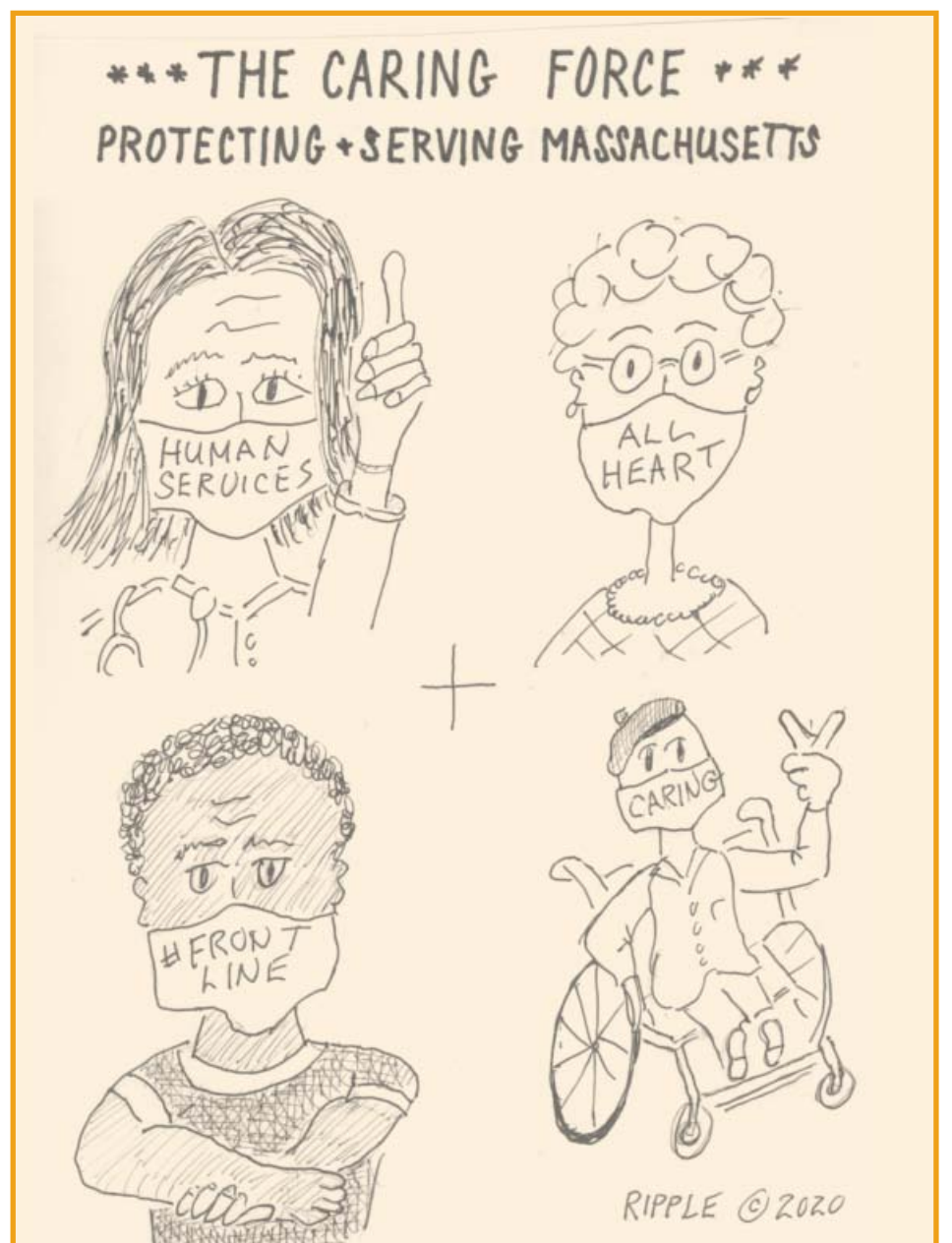
The third guidepost is embracing ingenuity and change. We have learned quite a bit about telehealth as an effective, and sometimes preferred, method for providing essential support services. Providers believe creative solutions like telehealth and the increase of work-from-home models, in certain situations, should be fostered and developed.

We also need to recognize that our capability for securing PPE and testing is less than optimal. New arrangements for obtaining personal protective equipment and readily available testing for clients and staff must be arranged and funded. That leads to the fourth guidepost, funding. A difficult state budget year lies ahead, with an estimated \$6 to \$9 billion deficit, and the state will have to make some important decisions on funding these essential services.

While these services are often erroneously called "discretionary," a misnomer that speaks against our societal values for caring, we must protect and care for all of our essential people in human services. In Massachusetts, this is not a discretionary value but an obligation of our fair and just society. Hopefully, the guideposts will help us advance that value.

So, let's be deliberate as we reopen and ensure all of our vulnerable populations are appropriately supported. We know that without quality human services we are a lesser "Commonwealth."

Let's reopen guided by principles, funded adequately, supported creatively, with an uncompromising commitment to disease mitigation.



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USPS crucial for Nov. vote by mail

By Cheryl Clyburn Crawford

One of our nation’s most venerable institutions has employees on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic. Its revenue is rapidly plummeting. Every day, its organizational fate becomes more and more uncertain.

In desperate need of financial aid, the United States Post Office (USPS) along with hundreds of organizations and industries petitioned the federal government for assistance through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act.

But who did the federal government really respond to? They responded to the airline industry, offering them a \$50 billion bailout. (Yet even this struggled to reach full implementation, as corporate executives originally balked at a stipulation mandating that 50 percent of these funds cover employee salaries.)

The USPS, meanwhile, received only a \$10 billion loan: nowhere near enough to bolster the financially-strapped institution. USPS lost \$8.8 billion in the last fiscal year, and with by-mail advertising down by as much as 60 percent due to the COVID-19 crisis, this debt is only expected to grow.

Unfortunately, it is far from certain that the postal service will receive the financial aid it so urgently requires, as USPS has rapidly and tragically become a tool of political brinkmanship. President Donald Trump has refused to provide USPS the \$75 billion in financial aid it seeks, claiming that it is too “cozy” with big corporations. Trump has instead called for USPS to raise their prices by as much as four times to better compete with other mailing and delivery services.

Yet, what President Trump fails to understand is that the postal service is not a corporation. Rather, it is an essential public service, crafted during the Second Continental Congress in 1775.

The nation’s founders recognized that an outlet must exist through which individuals may transmit information in a secure, affordable and convenient manner. Practicality and principle, not

politics, drove their decision.

COVID-19 only underscores how important USPS is to our nation. Having been deemed an essential service, the postal service’s nearly 200,000 employees are have continued to serve us. While USPS transfers more than one billion packages of medicine in typical times, that effort will become even greater during this crisis. It will also carry our medical bills, test results, personal protective equipment, and even the miscellaneous package meant to cheer us up.

But USPS may have to do even more this year. In light of our fall elections, MassVOTE is calling for Massachusetts to implement a vote-by-mail system.

All registered voters would automatically receive a ballot for the November U.S. general election. Voters would also receive pre-paid return envelopes to ship back their ballots, as well as secrecy sleeves to preserve their privacy. To maximize security and transparency, voters will also be able to track their ballots throughout the mailing process, knowing when they may receive it as well as when election officials process it.

Massachusetts has more than 4.5 million registered voters, and ensuring our elections take place in a safe and secure manner will represent an immense undertaking for the beleaguered postal service. Now is no time to play politics. As the country experiences an unprecedented health and economic crisis, voters must be able to speak their minds at the ballot box.

The federal government must take action and provide the postal service the funding it deserves. Without it, the dependable flow of information our founders so deeply treasured will come under great threat. That cannot, and must not, happen.

Cheryl Clyburn Crawford is the Executive Director of MassVOTE, a nonprofit, non-partisan advocacy organization dedicated to voting rights, voter education, and social justice.

Stats show need for Alzheimer’s services

By Michael Vance

Alzheimer’s Disease is not an inevitable part of aging, but the indisputable fact is that the incidence of the disease increases as we age.

Alzheimer’s Disease is the most common cause of dementia and it is the sixth leading cause of death in the United States. In Massachusetts alone, an estimated 130,000 residents have Alzheimer’s Disease or another form of dementia, and this number is projected to increase to 150,000 by 2025.

Nationally, the cost of caring for those with Alzheimer’s and other dementias is estimated to be \$305 billion this year. Meanwhile, the population over the age of 65 is expected to double by 2030.

Currently, a variety of in-home and community-based services and supports are available through designated Aging Services Access Points (ASAPs) throughout the Commonwealth to help persons with dementia remain as safely as possible in the community for as long as possible. While Home Care Program age eligibility criteria is age 60 and over, ASAPs may serve persons under the age of 60 with a diagnosis of Alzheimer’s Disease or a related disorder.

Based upon a comprehensive assessment, an individualized person-centered care plan is developed and coordinated with other supports available.

The Alzheimer’s Association estimates that more than 16 million Americans provide unpaid care for persons with Alzheimer’s and other dementias valued at nearly \$244 billion. Supporting caregivers is essential to maintaining persons with dementia in the least restrictive setting possible. The Administration for Community Living funds the Family Caregiver Support Program through local Area Agencies on Aging to help family and other informal caregivers. Virtual Memory Cafes also provide supportive opportunities for caregivers and those with dementia to connect with others and reduce isolation.

In addition to the current dementia research and clinical trials, gender and

racial disparities require further study. The incidence of Alzheimer’s Disease is higher among African Americans and Hispanic Americans but they are underrepresented in many research initiatives. The Alzheimer’s & Dementia Disparities Engagement Network (ADDEN) is one opportunity to join efforts to address these disparities. These higher rates of Alzheimer’s Disease mirror the disparities we are seeing with COVID-19 and preexisting health conditions.

The mission of Central Boston Elder Services is to provide high quality, responsive, supportive services and programs to the elderly and the disabled in need of health and human services.

We are committed to partnering with families, caregivers and community entities that embrace the philosophy and our mission to reduce social, economic and health disparities.

Aligned with our mission, Central Boston Elder Services is a member of the Community Leadership Advisory Board (CLAB), which is a part of Massachusetts General Hospital/Brigham and Women’s Hospital Alzheimer’s Research Team.

It meets every two months with a focus to determine best ways to educate and outreach to the African American community. Considerations include building trust and confidence in medical research so that those with the disease and beginning stages will consent to be tested and participate in studies, as well as addressing fears of being tested.

Short of a cure, public policy makers, the health care system, home and community-based service providers and caregiver support networks must prepare to meet an unprecedented demand for services in the future.

We will continue to advocate for increased funding for research and direct services at the state and federal level.

Systemically, workforce issues including compensation, recruitment and retention must be addressed to ensure the quality and availability of in-home and community-based services to meet the needs of this population.

Michael A. Vance is the CEO of Central Boston Elder Services, Inc.

Large-scale preparation needed for Massachusetts’ smallest residents

By Joan Kagan

As an early education and care provider, I have been approached by many employers who want to know when we will open. We know that businesses rely on child care to provide a safe, healthy, and nurturing place for their children to learn and grow, so that their employees can go to work with peace of mind.

Square One has been busy making preparations for welcoming back our children into our programs. At the same time, our team of educators and family support specialists has worked tirelessly to provide emergency supplies of food, diapers and other essentials and has performed countless hours of virtual home visits, therapy sessions and educational videos, while our buildings have been closed.

As we prepare to reopen, the health, wellness and safety of the children, families and staff is paramount. We have looked to the CDC, the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC), and the Reopening Advisory Board among others to guide us in our preparation. Currently, we are waiting for EEC to unveil their health and safety guidelines and regulations – a critical piece to ensure consistency across the Commonwealth.

Our challenges are many and fall into two categories: financial resources and time.

Currently early education and care programs are underfunded, losing

- Test staff and teachers
 - Train teachers on new policies, protocols and procedures, including social distancing, hygiene and cleaning/disinfecting
 - Provide mental health support and training to teachers
 - Communicate to families about the new protocols and procedures and help them prepare their children for returning (e.g. teachers will be wearing masks; parents will hand their child at the door to a teacher who will escort the child to their classroom; support parents in making an informed decision about having their child return to the program if a household member is considered to be in a high health risk category)
 - Clean and prepare classrooms and buildings consistent with CDC guidelines (e.g. removing rugs, sand tables, water tables, certain toys, signs, traffic arrows etc.).
 - Set up a quarantine room for children to wait for their parent to pick them up if they become sick during the day
- We have recommended that the state procure access to testing, supplies and cleaning companies. Neither center-based nor family child care can compete with large medical facilities, health care providers and city departments for these essential items and services. Centralized purchasing of supplies and vendors will avoid large institutions outbidding providers and

also prevent providers from bidding against one another. The purchasing power of the Commonwealth will help to contain costs and ensure access.

In order for the early childhood business model to succeed during this time, funding is needed to pay for additional staff to ensure children are sufficiently distancing, wearing a mask (for children ages 3 and up, if tolerated and with parental consent), escorting children in and out of the center, as well as to perform increased cleaning throughout the day.

We will also need to increase funding for our therapy services to address the trauma that many children have endured during the shutdown.

We look forward to the day when we can welcome back our children and families. In the meantime, we are strongly advocating for EEC to continue the current model of reimbursement, which is based on enrollment numbers from March 2020 and included parent fees. We ask that this model be continued through the end of this calendar year.

Joan Kagan, MSW, LICSW, is the President & CEO of Square One, one of Massachusetts’ oldest and largest non-profit providers of early education and family support services.

Census Bureau makes operational adjustments due to Coronavirus

The Census Bureau has received congressional authorization to shift its operational timeline, allowing extra time to ensure a Complete Count in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The current timeline calls for the bureau to resume field operations on June 1; the timing for Massachusetts, however, is still under consideration. The Bureau has delayed visits to group homes and congregate care facilities until mid-summer and reapportionment counts will not be finalized and reported until April 30, 2021, four months later than initially planned.

Although the new operational timeline will delay results, it is hoped that additional time will allow for organizations doing Census outreach work, including the Human Services Providers Charitable Foundation, to better reach hard-to-count communities.

When the Census Bureau set out to perform their decennial count, federal officials had already anticipated a challenging roll out in 2020. The national head count was already planned to be primarily online for the first time, amidst a Presidential election.

Due to a set of complex challenges, many states have seen their 2020 self-response rate lag behind benchmarks from 2010. Massachusetts ranks 20th among states with a self-response rate of about 62 percent.

By contrast, the Commonwealth achieved approximately a 69 percent self-response rate over the same time

period 10 years earlier. The 2020 figure is expected to climb as the bureau makes preparations to safely canvass households that have not responded yet.

Despite the pandemic, the Census remains crucial for the human services sector in Massachusetts. In addition to securing congressional representation, data collected is used to determine how federal funding gets allocated.

Each person who fills out the Census has an impact on their community, receiving a share of \$675 billion per year for neighborhood improvements, public health, education, transportation and much more. An undercount can mean Massachusetts loses millions of dollars for programs like Head Start and Section 8 Housing Assistance.

The HSPCF has been hard at work to promote the 2020 Census. The Foundation used a grant from the Secretary of the Commonwealth to mail over 2,000 posters to Providers' Council members, issue mini-grants to several human services organizations to conduct outreach, send reminder postcards to organizations and conduct an educational webinar about the Census' importance with representatives from the Census Bureau.

More materials on the 2020 Census are available at www.providers.org/Census, including our new interactive data map, which displays self-response rates for counties and cities in the Commonwealth.



A VIEW FROM THE HILL

A commentary from a legislator on human services

Commonwealth will emerge stronger from COVID-19 crisis

By Rep. Nika Elugardo

While the public health impacts of the once-in-a-generation pandemic will reverberate for years, arguably the economic aftershocks will continue even longer.

On the individual level, job loss and reduced wages are not necessarily bouncing back once we have a vaccine for COVID-19. Many businesses and nonprofits that were able to hang on for six months or a year, will flounder and fail eventually.

Some colleges and training programs that were holding on through this period of shared suffering will ultimately close. Workers who were advancing their careers through higher education or professional development training will lose access and may stagnate or regress.

This grim forecast is driven by the insufficiency and inequity of the federal stimulus packages to date. According to Census Bureau data released on May 14, nearly 75 percent of small businesses surveyed applied for relief through the CARES Act Paycheck Protection Program, yet less than 40 percent received aid.

For the smallest businesses and nonprofits, especially those run by women and people of color, the rates were much lower.

In both business assistance and unemployment insurance, the federal stimulus package is designed to help the strongest companies first. The struggling and the most down-and-out — well, they are on their own. Gig economy and self-employed workers waited for weeks to find out whether they would be eligible for unemployment insurance.

Working immigrants without documentation beyond the Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) they use to pay the taxes that fund these programs, get nada. Zero in unemployment insurance. Zero even for mixed status families in stimulus payments, despite the fact that many of our essential services from groceries to elder care are provided by members of these same families.

Even Personal Protective Equipment took months to find its way to lower-wage frontline direct care and social services workers.

States like Massachusetts are eager to fill in the gaps. Within weeks of the declaration of a state of emergency, Massachusetts legislators had filed more than 80 COVID-19 response and relief bills.

Now the number tops 100 bills and keeps climbing. These include: decarceration of prisoners, small business grants, election integrity, domestic violence prevention and bolstering the safety net for residents in deep poverty. We

passed a moratorium on foreclosures as well as both residential and commercial evictions, before we'd even developed the technological capacity to hold a formal session and debate which meant the vote had to be unanimous to pass.

Yet, we still await significant relief to states and municipalities.

The Massachusetts FY20 budget is wanting to the tune of \$3 to 4 billion, and some project the budget shortfall for FY21 to nearly double that. This doesn't even begin to account for the increase in costs due to COVID-19.

We have only just begun to feel the economic impacts of COVID-19, and we aren't feeling them equally. The fissures in our systems of justice, public health, housing, education, and workforce and economic development have widened to the breaking point under the pressure of a global pandemic that hits already disenfranchised communities hardest.

Yet, a silver lining lingers. We have time to change the forecast.

If Congress helps us close our budget gap, Massachusetts can go the distance to begin repairing the cracks to our foundation resulting from decades of structurally reinforced poverty and racism. We currently have some of the most progressive legislation in history moving through the Massachusetts Legislature in service to COVID-19 recovery.

We must take up the historic mantle of the Commonwealth, with our long history of revolution, and fight like crazy to prioritize the bills and funding that protect the most vulnerable residents and businesses first. We should pressure the U.S. Congress to do the same.

In times of crisis the character of a nation is exposed. The same can be said for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. There will be no greater indicator of our shared values and morality than how we prioritize our spending and legislative programs in the midst of the coronavirus crisis.

I have seen an unprecedented coming together of legislators across the political spectrum to get us to this point, and I have every reason to believe that this will continue in the coming months.

Together we will get through this. With a little faith, we will come out stronger and more just than we have ever been.



Rep. Nika Elugardo

Rep. Nika Elugardo of Boston represents the 15th Suffolk District.

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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New resources for Council members

The Providers' Council is excited to announce a new, free benefit for provider members: members-only listservs and a new website portal. Individuals employed at Providers' Council member agencies may subscribe or unsubscribe from any of the members-only listservs at any time. To join, simply email the appropriate staff member that manages the listserv.

Member Exchange Listserv: For provider members to exchange important information about their agency or the human services sector. Share important news and announcements about your agency, your staff or other important sector-wide news. To join, email cbroughton@providers.org.

Training and Human Resources Listserv: For training and human resource professionals at provider agencies to discuss professional development and HR practices. Share important resources, pose questions related to human resources and network electronically with your fellow HR professionals! To join, email eadams@providers.org.

Providers' eAcademy Listserv: For staff of any member agency participating in the popular Providers' eAcademy program. Ask important questions on

best practices and share resources to improve your usage of the online learning management system (LMS). To join, email zhouland@providers.org.

We hope our members will find this new, free benefit to be an invaluable resource. Don't hesitate to reach out with any questions at 508.599.2243.

Member executives can access improved resources, tools and information through the members-only portal on our website. Now with a new design making the portal easier to navigate, the site contains new tools and resources including: a member benefits checklist; updated member internal and external resources; webinars, eDigest and The Provider archives; background on the Council's trainers and presenters; Providers' eAcademy resources; members-only news and announcements; and more. Check out the new members-only portal at providers.org/member-login.

If you are a provider member and need access to the members-only portal, please contact Christina Broughton at cbroughton@providers.org.

Please note that access to the members-only portal requires approval by your CEO.

Council elects new directors, officers

The Providers' Council held its Annual Membership and Business Meeting May 6 via Zoom to elect its 2020-2021 Board of Directors and Officers.

Jule Gomes Noack, HMEA's president/COO, and Lydia Todd, NFI Massachusetts' executive director, will be joining other Council board members that are returning for another term. Noack will become HMEA's president and CEO on July 1, replacing Michael Moloney.

The diverse, 34-member Board of Directors is representative of member

organizations across the state who provide supports to one-in-ten state residents



Lydia Todd

Bill Sprague returns as board chair for the second straight year. Other officers continuing in their leadership roles include Nancy Munson, chair-elect; Sandra McCreary, vice chair; Michael Vance, treasurer; Susan

Stubbs as assistant treasurer; Diane Gould as clerk; Mia Alvarado as assistant clerk; Jackie K. Moore as immediate past chair; and Gerry Wright as chair emeritus.

Dropkicks ship up to Casa Myrna



Supporters of Casa Myrna's recent #KeepTheLightOn campaign got a video message from Ken Casey, lead singer of the Dropkick Murphys, a popular band hailing from Boston. Casey is "amazingly generous with his time," said Leela Strong, Casa Myrna's development director. "When asked to provide a video for the campaign, Ken immediately said yes and sent the video within 24 hours. He told our board member via text message: 'As a man, and one with privilege, I am thankful for you reaching out to me, I hope this helps.'"

REOPENING: Future uncertain as orgs. prepare for new normal

Continued from Page 1

his organization's large warehouse should be able to handle the social distancing requirements needed for the staff and hundreds of consumers who typically participate in on-site work and community programs.

Training members on wearing masks and arranging for nurses to start daily temperature checks are on WORK Inc.'s long list of preparation steps that will be ongoing over the summer, although Cassetta does not see a likely return to full day program activity much before Labor Day. "And that is if there is not another surge," he said.

Transportation also remains a concern, Cassetta added. WORK, Inc. has more than a dozen 15-person vans, but current social distancing regulations would not allow more than three passengers and a driver.

While Cassetta noted his residential programs have received needed financial commitments from the Commonwealth through the end of the fiscal year, he is "seriously concerned about July 1" when the state begins its new fiscal year.

"We are advocating strongly for a COVID-19 supplemental budget for FY 21," Cassetta said. "We are hoping, at the minimum, the state will continue to

support us how they have supported us in the last quarter."

Ruth Banta, executive director of Pathlight, said she believes June will look a lot like May for the Springfield-based organization. Like many Council members, much of Pathlight's staff continued working full-time, with the main change being a dramatic increase in remote work among administrators.

That shift has worked so well, Banta said, that Pathlight is considering leasing smaller spaces for its five offices spread across western Massachusetts.

The agency's residential programs "have gotten into a rhythm they feel good about — where there is a low risk of exposure when sheltering in place," Banta said.

Any transition to reopen will be slow and gradual. "We'll move slowly, because people are feeling cautious about risk," said Banta.

The Providers' Council and other trade associations in *The Collaborative* continue to meet weekly with Executive Office of Health and Human Services officials to discuss issues that arise in the community-based human services sector and potential solution.

Any Council members with issues or concerns are encouraged to contact Bill Yelenak at bill@providers.org.

FEDERAL: UI advocacy, .org protection among big issues

Continued from Page 1

Klocke and Providers' Council President and CEO Michael Weekes wrote to Neal in May.

While the federal CARES Act allowed nonprofits that self-insure for unemployment insurance to receive a 50 percent credit on those costs, federal guidance issued by the U.S. Department of Labor on April 27 indicated that states must charge nonprofits the full amount and reimburse them, rather than simply credit nonprofits half their total amount owed. The insistence on receiving funds up front could face a hardship for nonprofits who have endured cash flow issues due to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated programs being shut down.

The HEROES Act, passed by the House in May, would make a technical correction to the CARES Act and emphasize that states may simply waive half of the payments owed by self-insured nonprofits, rather than making them pay 100 percent initially and then reimbursing them 50 percent. Senate leadership, however, has indicated they will not approve the HEROES Act in its current form. At press time, the bill was stalled.

In the interim, Providers' Council members that self-insure for unemployment should use the Department of Unemployment Assistance to check their expected assessments. Organiza-

tions are urged to check assessments online and not wait for bills to be issued, as some organizations are noticing errors in billing. Organizations noticing errors in billing should contact the Department of Unemployment Assistance to address any inaccuracies.

Organizations wanting more information or wishing to discuss their experience should contact Bill Yelenak at the Council (bill@providers.org).

Sale of top-level .org domain blocked

In other federal news, the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) blocked the sale of the top-level .org domain name to a venture capital firm.

Ethos Capital had a deal to buy the .org domain name for more than \$1 billion in late 2019 from the Public Interest Registry and the Internet Society. ICANN received plenty of opposition to the sale from nonprofits and others; nearly 900 organizations and more than 27,000 people signed a petition at savedotorg.org opposing the sale.

"After completing extensive due diligence, the ICANN Board finds that withholding consent of the transfer of PIR from the Internet Society to Ethos Capital is reasonable, and the right thing to do," ICANN said in a statement on April 30.



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SPEAK UP 4



The Providers' Council has extended the deadline for applicants to submit an RFP to present a workshop at this year's 45th Annual Convention & Expo: Stand Up For Equity.

The Council is seeking presentations on a diverse range of topics relevant to the field of human services, from worker safety to healthcare reform and self-care. We especially encourage topics that are conducive to this year's theme.

Presenters receive complimentary admission to the entire Convention & Expo. Each 90-minute workshop generally has 20 to 100 attendees, but attendance may vary.

If you would like to share your professional knowledge and expertise with this diverse audience, please complete the proposal form online at

www.providers.org.

Please submit RFPs as soon as possible. The information requested on the application is needed for CEU applications and convention registration materials.

The Council is actively monitoring guidelines surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic. In the event that we are not able to host this convention in-person, we have a contingency plan in place to offer workshops online for our members. We will keep you informed with any updates regarding our convention plans as the situation evolves.

Questions? Contact Eliza Adams at 508.598.9700 or eadams@providers.org.



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Posting jobs at Jobs with Heart is free for Council members! The site features easy-to-use tools and is customizable for your organization.

The Providers' Council members can post jobs **for free** on our jobs board, **Jobs With Heart!**

Visit **jobswithheart.org** today to post a job for your organization!
Need help? Contact bill@providers.org.

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Jeffrey Hirsch



Richard Loftus



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