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## 2021-2022 Legislative Agenda

The Providers' Council discussed legislative priorities with its statewide human service membership prior to the start of the session in January 2021. Our legislative agenda is based on feedback and input from our members, our Public Policy Committee, Executive Committee and Board of Directors. The Council's priorities for the legislative session are as follows:

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### ***An act relative to fair pay for comparable work***

**House Bill filed by Rep. Kay Khan (House Bill 237)**

**Senate Bill filed by Sen. Cindy Friedman (Senate Bill 105)**

***Last action: Bills reported favorably; referred to Ways & Means (February 2022)***

Similar job titles and roles exist for individuals employed by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and those employed at private, community-based human services nonprofits, but the rate of pay is often drastically different – sometimes by up to 30 percent. Due to this disparity, it is becoming increasingly difficult to recruit and retain qualified workers in the community-based human services sector.

This bill would set a schedule to eliminate the pay disparity between state workers and those employed by private, community-based human services nonprofits who are doing similar work under state contracts, providing care and services to residents on behalf of the Commonwealth. It would also authorize reports from the administration on the current pay disparity between workers and new strategies to recruit and retain human services workers at community-based nonprofits.

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### ***An act establishing an education loan repayment program for human services workers***

**House Bill filed by Reps. Jeffrey Roy, Smitty Pignatelli (House Bill 266)**

**Senate Bill filed by Sen. Eric Lesser (Senate Bill 120)**

***Last action: Bills reported favorably; referred to Ways & Means (February 2022)***

Many human services workers' salaries start at just between \$14 and \$15 an hour – just slightly more than minimum wage. The lack of affordable higher education for human services workers and the burden of student debt greatly contribute to the sector's recruitment and retention difficulties. More than 75 percent of human services workers attended some college or have a degree.

This bill would create an education loan repayment program for human service workers. To be eligible, workers must be working at least 35 hours per week, have an individual income of less than \$50,000 per year and have maintained 12 consecutive months of employment in the sector. The program would allow workers to receive up to \$150/month for a period not to exceed 48 months to repay a qualified education loan that was used to attend an institution of higher learning.

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**For more information:**

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