

An act relative to a livable wage for human services workers

Bill purpose: To eliminate the pay disparity that exists between the salaries of human services workers employed by community-based human service providers and state employees holding similar job titles who perform similar work.

Recent action: HD.3396 (Rep. Domb) and SD.1201 (Sen. Friedman) filed in the House and Senate in January 2025.

Key Facts:

- 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 with state workers paid significantly more.
- The Commonwealth is the largest purchaser of human services from community-based human services nonprofits.
- The model budgets often created by the Commonwealth for human services programs contain salaries that are lower than what the state pays for similar positions.
- Due to this salary disparity, it has become increasingly difficult for community-based organizations to recruit/retain qualified workers in the sector, which has nearly 160,000 jobs.
- Without a solution to the workforce crisis, an increasing number of jobs will go unfilled and programs may close, leading to a loss of services for vulnerable Massachusetts residents.

If passed, this legislation would:

- Set a schedule to fully eliminate the pay disparity between state workers and those employed by community-based human services nonprofits who are doing similar work.
- Executive Office of Health and Human Services will issue a report to legislative committees on April 1, 2025, detailing the disparity amount and the annual increases necessary to address the disparity. This report, mandated by line item 1599-6903 in the Chapter 257 Rate Reserve in the FY '25 budget, will provide critical guidance for modifying the bill to ensure the funding aligns with the sector's needs.
- Eliminate the pay disparity between state workers and those at community-based human services nonprofits no later than July 1, 2029.
- Apply to human services workers employed by private, community-based human services nonprofits that have contracts with the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, Executive Office of Elder Affairs and Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities to provide services.
- Ensure annual reports are provided by the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, Executive Office of Elder Affairs, the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities and the Department of Early Education and Care – in collaboration with the Providers' Council – and sent to House and Senate committees detailing the ongoing scope of the pay disparity and a schedule for phasing it out by July 1, 2029.

For more information:

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