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Baker announces a 'terrific investment' in human services

Chapter 257 Reserve set at \$79 million

On Jan. 27, Gov. Charlie Baker presented his FY '22 budget proposal, a \$45.6 billion spending plan that he said would protect core services, support low-income students, encourage local community economic growth and fuel the state's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Gov. Baker specifically singled out the state's human service workers during his budget press conference, noting he was proposing \$79 million in new funding for human services programs through the Chapter 257 Reserve (1599-6903).

"That \$79 million will be a terrific investment in organizations that, especially during the course of this pandemic, have looked after, taken care of, and supported some of the most vulnerable citizens we have here in the Commonwealth," Gov. Baker said.

The FY' 22 proposal, known as House 1, includes about \$300 million

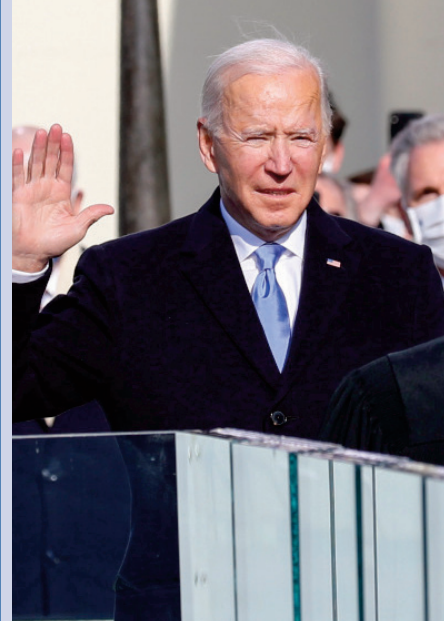
in spending cuts—a 0.7 percent decrease over FY '21 spending—and no new tax increases, made possible in part by a predicted drop in health spending due to lower-than-expected enrollments in MassHealth.

The budget recommendation asks for a \$1.6 billion withdrawal from the Stabilization Fund. "The revenue picture remains somewhat unpredictable," said the governor. "We don't believe raising taxes on the residents of the Commonwealth during a pandemic is the right thing to do."

The proposal also includes a new tax credit for companies that hire individuals with disabilities, a boost to the state's Emergency Assistance Family Shelter System funding to \$195.9 million (an 8 percent increase) and provides \$30 million to address recommendations from the Black Advisory Commission and the Latino Advisory Commission. The budget also

BUDGET, see page 7

Historic Inauguration brings welcome changes to Washington



Joseph R. Biden (left) and Kamala Harris (right) were sworn in as the 46th President and Vice President of the United States on January 20 on the steps of the U.S. Capitol in Washington. Harris is the nation's first woman, Black and Asian-American vice president. Photo credits: Wikimedia Commons.

Essential Worker campaign support signs spread

Campaign aims to boost awareness of human services' hidden heroes

The message is sprouting up in front yards across Massachusetts, including communities as varied as Somerville, Longmeadow, Douglas and Danvers – "Thank You Essential Human Service Workers!"

The Caring Force in January launched a public awareness campaign designed to thank community-based human services workers for their incredible efforts every day and especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Initially, the campaign has distributed lawn signs, now nearing 3,000 in circulation and rising quickly, with the intent to highlight the jobs being done by direct care workers and many others who fill 180,000 jobs in the Commonwealth.

"We're thrilled that so many have purchased lawn signs and they're proudly displaying them, thanking our essential human services workers for the incredible job that they do in caring for one-in-ten

residents of the Commonwealth," said Council President/CEO Michael Weekes.

But the message doesn't just stop at lawn signs. It is plastered across large billboards in Worcester, Billerica and Framingham – and another billboard could soon appear in the western part of the state.

Additionally, Governor Charlie Baker has also recorded a public service announcement on behalf of the campaign, recognizing critical human services staff across the Commonwealth.

The Caring Force, the 28,000-member grassroots advocacy initiative of the Providers' Council, is also recruiting Caring Force ambassadors, staff, clients, family members, board members and others who may have a connection to the sector and who would want to be a part of the campaign.



Council board member Gerry Wright (left) proudly displays his yard sign and NFI Massachusetts staff display a sign at their location.



WORKERS, see page 7

RDI Committee aims to Educate in 2021

The Council's Race, Diversity and Inclusion Committee is preparing to launch the second phase of its Call to Action: *Educate*.

Educate is the second of a five-part campaign established by the committee over the summer to support efforts to combat racism and injustice and create communities of respect, equity and inclusion within the human services sector.

Among the priorities of the *Educate* stage are educational programming and the distribution of materials and resources that will help Council members in making all staff feel safe taking the COVID vaccine.

Other RDI *Educate* goals include an active agenda of education programs, which kicked off in late January with a Race, Diversity and Inclusion Roundtable featuring panelists Dani Silcox, vice president, Justice Resource Insti-

DIVERSITY, see page 7

PROVIDERS' NEWS AND NOTES

Dimock Center selects Dr. Charles Anderson as new president and CEO

The Board of Directors of **The Dimock Center** has appointed Charles Anderson, MD, MPH, MBA as the new president and CEO of the organization that provides high quality health care to Boston's underserved neighborhoods.



Dr. Charles Anderson

Dr. Anderson has served in a wide variety of roles over the past 25 years in the Boston-area health care community, including co-chairing the committee on Building Strong Families and Communities as part of the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care's Birth to School-Age Task Force.

"The Dimock Center has been a trusted health care partner in Roxbury for more than 150 years. I am honored to be part of an organization that has been focused on correcting historic health inequities since its founding in 1862, especially as this pandemic has exacerbated inequities and health disparities in communities of color," said Dr. Anderson.

He received his bachelor's degree from Princeton University, an MPH from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, an MD from the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, and an MBA from Boston University.

Square One Names New President & CEO

Square One has named Dawn Forbes DiStefano its new president and chief executive officer, replacing long-time leader Joan Kagan, who recently retired.

Following a 25-year career with the YWCA of Western Massachusetts, DiStefano joined the Square One team in

January 2016 to lead the agency's grant research, grant writing and program-compliance efforts. In 2019, she was promoted to executive vice president where she took on oversight of the agency's early-education and care programs and family-support services, and management of operations, including transportation, food service and IT.



Dawn Forbes DiStefano

"Just as we pride ourselves on developing the leaders of tomorrow through our own programs and services, I am privileged to have experienced the leadership of Joan Kagan," says DiStefano. "It is an honor for me to continue to navigate the path that Joan and those before her have paved."

BIDMC invests in NSMHA program to break down barriers to mental health services in Chelsea

Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center (BIDMC) has selected 17 local organizations, including **North Suffolk Mental Health Association**, to receive funding for initiatives in the areas of housing affordability, jobs and financial security, and behavioral health.

This funding represents a significant portion of the \$18.4 million dollars that will be invested into the community over the next six years as part of the Massachusetts Determination of Need process for BIDMC's new inpatient building.

BIDMC's Community-Based Health Initiative awarded \$270,000 to NSMHA to improve access to behavioral health services in the city of Chelsea over the next two years. The Latino Community Advance Response Team will start breaking down the racial and ethnic inequities in behavioral health care currently experienced within Chelsea's

Saying goodbye to a Pathways legend



Pathways for Children said goodbye to its founder and 40-year veteran Sue Todd and completed its leadership transition to new president and CEO Eric Mitchell, who took the helm Jan. 1, 2021. To honor Todd, the agency held a virtual gala which can be seen at www.pathwaysgala.org.

Hispanic and Latino population by ensuring direct access to culturally sensitive, quality clinical intensive case management supports.

City of Boston awards \$1.6 million in grants for COVID-19 relief and youth programming

The City of Boston has announced grants totaling \$1.6 million to more than six dozen local nonprofits providing food and health care during the COVID-19 pandemic and offering youth development and violence prevention programming.

Among the Council members receiving grants were: **ABCD, Advocates, City Mission, Justice Resource Institute and More than Words.**

"A fundamental part of our residents' public health and public safety

is expanding existing services and implementing additional strategies to increase the accessibility of youth programming and violence prevention," said Mayor Martin J. Walsh

BCArc awarded \$1 million over five years

Berkshire County Arc was awarded a five-year contract totaling \$1 million from the Mass. Department of Developmental Services to support Berkshire County families. The contract funds BC Arc to continue supporting more than 300 families in Central and Southern Berkshire County through a series of trainings, two support centers, networking activities, respite services, and help accessing the system of services available to them.



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About the Agency

The Care Center's education program in Holyoke is designed for young mothers living in poverty. Supports like child care, transportation, counseling and medical care allow students to concentrate on their studies.

Its philosophy is simple: People in need and people of means require the same things to succeed.

Founded in 1986, The Care Center originally focused on helping young mothers earn GEDs. By the late nineties, it had become increasingly difficult to earn a living wage without a college education.

The organization, under the leadership of Anne Teschner, shifted its focus to college preparation. Many doubted that activities like rowing, poetry and arts would lead to academic improvement for teen mothers.

But the impact was clear: since the shift, approximately 75 percent of graduates continue to college each year.

About five years ago, The Care Center was disappointed to find that only about 10 to 15 percent of its graduates were completing degrees in traditional college settings.

To address this issue, The Care Center and its longtime partner, Bard College, launched the nation's first college designed for young mothers and low-income women.

The Care Center is also partnering with Way Finders, Inc. to open a housings and arts space for young parents in college. Ten families will move in this winter.

The Care Center's budget is \$2.3 million. Funding comes from the government, private foundations, individual donors, corporations and events.

Helping young mothers craft their futures



Young mothers in The Care Center's onsite college, Bard Microcollege Holyoke, which combines a rigorous college education with parenting supports. (Photos by Michael Zide)

The low-income young mothers who participate in The Care Center's high school-level program have all dropped out of school. Like the best college preparatory schools in the country, The Care Center incorporates small class sizes, lively academics, athletics, and a commitment to success.

While students read Plato, create artwork, write poetry and row on the Connecticut River, supports such as transportation, daycare, counseling, meals and an onsite nurse practitioner allow them to concentrate on their studies. With the help of The Care Center's college transition counselor, 75 percent of its graduates - all young mothers who have dropped out of school - continue to college.

Once young mothers enter college, it is common for family obligations, financial constraints, and lack of support to stand in the way of earning a degree. Single mothers in college are half as likely as non-parenting women to earn a degree within six years.

The Care Center's onsite college, Bard Microcollege Holyoke, addresses this gap by combining a rigorous college program with supports designed for low-income mothers. Thanks to The Care Center's generous donors, scholarships and grants cover tuition and books and the degree is free.



Bard Microcollege Holyoke has a 74 percent college graduation rate. Built-in supports like child care, transportation and meals, along with the camaraderie of the close-knit group of women, all contribute to students' success.

Students graduate with an associate degree from Bard College, one of the most respected institutions of higher education in the country. Graduates have gone on to pursue bachelor's degrees at Smith, Mount Holyoke and Trinity colleges.

All of this work takes place in a turn-of-the-century brick mansion that The Care Center converted into an education center. The first floor houses a daycare for babies and toddlers.

The Care Center's newest program, Roque House, will soon offer ten apartments to young families working toward economic sufficiency.

This program was created in partnership with Way Finders, the region's longtime affordable housing developer. Roque House will provide academic and life support to young parent residents, who will also create and present onsite art, cultural, and educational events.

Residents and their children will live in beautiful, safe, furnished, and affordable housing as they move on their path to self-sufficiency.

Executive Leadership

Anne Teschner, executive director of The Care Center, has a long history of working on behalf of at-risk youth, especially young mothers.

She was the founding director of the Tri-City YMCA Family Daycare Network and the Holyoke Teen Pregnancy Coalition and the Massachusetts Youth Reach Initiative.



Teschner joined The Care Center in 1998. Her belief that teen mothers living in poverty who have dropped out of high school have the same cerebral needs as financially privileged students who attend our nation's finest prep schools has been both questioned and revered.

Under Teschner's leadership, The Care Center received the National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award in 2011. First Lady Michelle Obama presented the award to Teschner during a ceremony at the White House.

Teschner earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Massachusetts and a master's degree in American Studies from Trinity College.

An avid rower who has competed in the Head of the Charles Regatta, Teschner developed Rowing Strong, Rowing Together, which introduces young mothers to the sport of rowing.

SALUTING THE CARING FORCE

One staff, one unit during a crisis

During this difficult time, the staff at **Family Independence** has managed to remain one staff, one unit.

COVID-19 has not stopped this team from being dedicated and committed to the families that reside at Family Independence.

The Family Independence team has gone above and beyond to ensure the families remain safe and have access to PPE and COVID-19 testing. Family Independence staff are not just looked at as staff members but as life coaches and role models that display daily positive peer relations.

The team is diverse in culture and skill set, and it assists residents with problem solving, life skills, life coaching, parenting and much more.

The staff of Family Independence assists the residents with navigating the road map of life and becoming the best parent possible.

When residents come in, some are like puzzles with pieces missing, disheveled or out-of-place. FI case managers see their job and mission is to help them locate and put the missing puzzle pieces together in their proper place.

Each member offered some

thoughts to share about their commitment to their work:

"Every day as I arrive to work, I look at it as an opportunity to work with each resident as a potential new start and a brighter tomorrow," said Tranace.

"The team continues to work hard to help residents rebuild and connect with their families when it is appropriate. Live right so that others make the right choices," said Yvonne.

"Create the village you need to empower yourself and promote family growth and change, you determine what your village looks like," said Angela W.

"I see this as a golden opportunity to support young families, a great opportunity to offer life skills beyond the standard. I have a natural passion for working with the brilliant, but underserved. Life is precious, so I live by help each one, teach one!" said Ida.

"The team at Family Independence embraces each day as a new day, and treats each family and resident as an individual with respect, to whom much is given, much is expected in return," said Glen.

"Shine bright! The spark within you may light the path for those to come," said Sharee.



Family Independence staffers

IAC trio act as "role models"

Immigrants Assistance Center Executive Director Helena DaSilva-Hughes calls the organization's three case managers, Liz Lozada, Anabel Arias and Lucia Oliveira, "role models for essential workers who have been absolutely amazing during the pandemic."

When the COVID-19 pandemic struck ten months ago, the needs of the immigrant community IAC serves was clear. More than 25 percent of the 12,000 people served annually are vulnerable elders who face significant language and technology barriers.

"Our clients have low literacy skills, language, cultural, economic and technology barriers, so doing things virtually does not work for this population," said DaSilva-Hughes. "The staff made wellness calls to our elderly clients, assisted them over the phone applying for benefits, picked up mail at their homes so that we could translate and call them back to ease their anxiety. They also dropped off medication at our elders' homes and delivered food to their homes."

The three women are all proud immigrants to the United States themselves and have a deep understanding of the needs and fears of the population they

serve.

Arias works with families in need of support services and citizenship applications, while Oliveira focuses on elders, most of whom are from Portugal and Cape Verde. Lozada, who started her career at IAC with AmeriCorps and was hired full-time, works with unaccompanied youth at New Bedford High School. Most of those young people are from Central America with minimal education and have suffered from trauma.

The pandemic has intensified the issues already challenging the immigrant community.

"We utilized our parking lot to see our clients and give out food to our families, distribute Chromebooks to English language Learners and connecting these families to internet services in collaboration with the New Bedford Public Schools," said DaSilva-Hughes.

"(Lozada) assisted the unaccompanied youth in connecting to virtual learning. During COVID they were working extra hours and were not utilizing virtual learning," she said.

COVID has been the biggest challenge the IAC has ever faced, and Lozada, Arias and Oliveira are "our rock stars, who live our mission," DaSilva-Hughes said.



From left to right: Liz Lozada, Anabel Arias and Lucia Oliveira

EDITORIAL



Michael Weekes
President / Publisher

Thank you Essential Workers!

Thank goodness we have extraordinary human services professionals who perform "essential" work in our human services sector 24 hours a day, seven days a week and 365 days a year.

They are remarkable exemplars of resilience, caring and strength. As we come to a new era in our nation, quite frankly, we can't thank them enough for helping to keep people safe even while many of them who are black, brown, immigrants, LGBTQ and other identities were under attack in this nation.

On January 20 at noon, under bright sunshine on the steps of our nation's Capitol, it appeared as if a four-year long dark cloud of intolerance had lifted as Joseph Biden and Kamala Harris were sworn in as our new president and vice president.

Stacey Abrams, widely acclaimed for getting out the vote in recent pivotal Georgia elections, remarked about the event under the shadow of COVID-19, "This is about setting the direction of our country," she said. "We spent four years in darkness, and we spent the last year in one of the lower circles of hell, but we have an opportunity to say we want leadership that sees us, that believes in us, and it couldn't be clearer."

Throughout our human services community, I heard loud sighs of relief that some of the vitriol and hate contributing to overtake the Capitol two weeks earlier—with an insurrection that resulted in deaths, destruction and a loss of faith in our institutions—may have ebbed, albeit temporarily. Hope was emerging that the nation may be positioning to unite and heal. Time will tell.

This is not naivete that our nation reaches Nirvana, but rather a hope that respect, dignity, fairness and equality—pillars of this democracy—are reinforced. Yet, there is the realization that this nation, universally assumed to epitomize democracy, has to confront its own demons of hypocrisy, prejudice and hatred to *heal thyself*.

I pray and hope that true healing emerges throughout our nation. We remain in a global pandemic that has taken the lives of over 425,000 Americans, with as many as 4,327 deaths each day. The New York Times reported of the loss of lives, "...it is on the order of Sept. 11th deaths more than a hundred times over."

"At that scale, the human brain compensates with a defense that political psychologists call 'psychic numbing,'" the paper reported. With an estimated 506,000 confirmed cases, and deaths now surging north

of 14,220 in Massachusetts, it will take an increased focus with vaccine immunizations, safe distancing, use of PPE and other aggressive measures from all of us to abate this crisis.

And let's not let the "numbing" inoculate us from our sense of humanity as within these numbers are our mothers, fathers, grandparents, friends, relatives, neighbors and our children. Minimally, we have to strengthen our resolve to extend accessible resources and caring to those that are the most at risk in communities of color, congregate care, older residents, those with two-or-more comorbidities and those in COVID-facing positions throughout our communities.

This brings me back to our essential human services workers. The public may not see them or be able to

easily identify them. More often than not, they do not wear a uniform that could identify them like a nurse, doctor, police, fire or EMT. But they are often performing lifesaving tasks as a residential worker, direct support

professional, social worker, outreach therapist, or teacher, or by changing a tracheotomy tube, delivering meals or many other tasks.

As the pandemic is inimical to our human services sector, threatening the safety net, our human services workers, then and now, stood up and stepped in to perform their essential duties. They often risked their own safety in quarantine with clients or isolation environments to care for the most vulnerable who may have an intellectual or developmental disability, have autism spectrum disorder, or have addiction or substance abuse problems. These workers care for our children, youth and families that are homeless, hungry or at risk. They are, without a doubt, our state's, "...other first responders."

The Council, along with its leadership and members, is joining to offer our sincere thanks to the human services workers in 180,000 jobs making a difference in Massachusetts. We have begun a campaign with messages and lawn signs that quite simply declare, "Thank You Essential Human Services Workers".

As a multilingual workforce, I hope the message resonates with you as "Gracias, Merci, Jai-rruh-jef, Asante, Shukran, Arigato, Todah, Obrigado," or in any of the many tongues of our workforce, when we exclaim "thank you!"

Please join us by expressing your thanks or grabbing a sign at www.thecaringforce.org.

Thank You!
Essential Human
Service Workers

Visit www.TheCaringForce.org THE CARING FORCE



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Not just a moment: We seek transformations and movements

By Imari Paris Jeffries

We live in an era of renewed activism and movements fueled by citizens and activists in the face of three pandemics: viral, racial, and economic.

Change movements like Black Lives Matter, movements for the environment, indigenous communities, and other social movements are demanding a reckoning with the enduring social, economic, environmental, and economic injustices that were once the targets of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Poor People's Campaign.

The fierce urgency of this moment has only been underscored by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has exacerbated social inequality and revealed, as King reminded us, that we are tied together in "an inescapable network of mutuality" and a "single garment of destiny."

This time calls for us all to meet these challenges with new policies and new programs, and with a more profound reorientation to the history that brought us to this crossroads. We must rely upon the stories and symbols to call us to common purposes, principles, and practices.

King Boston as an organization has emerged within this time of crisis and speaks to the widely felt need to build new monuments and public works that speak to more inclusive and ambitious visions of justice and democratic citizenship.

King Boston envisions a radically inclusive and equitable Boston and Commonwealth where BIPOC communities

can thrive, grounded in joy, healing, and wellbeing.

This will be done with a focus on three bodies of work. The Hank Willis Thomas-designed memorial, "The Embrace," exists to inspire a new civic narrative rooted in the promise of Martin Luther and Coretta Scott King's ideals of "beloved community and agape love.

These values opens our hearts and mind to realize their role in bringing about a more just society. "The Embrace" is part of a living monument that will be coupled with the Center for Economic Justice, a research, policy, and arts institution located in Roxbury. And finally, Embrace Ideas, an annual homecoming of music, arts, spiritual, and civic educational work.

But we all can be King Boston in our own organizations. This moment has allowed us to challenge our existing ways of being that our rooted in dominant culture ideologies. In our own organizations, we can erect new living symbols of togetherness, interrogate organizational policies and research that is not transformative and hold each accountable to work through differences and challenges.

Lastly, we can commit to engaging our humanity through arts, music, and the humanities (regardless of organization type) to socialize into new norms rooted in love, belonging, and justice. Together, these three components will form a dynamic recognition of the King legacy that lives in each of us and is ready to be unleashed.

Imari Paris Jeffries is the executive director of King Boston.

Amidst a pandemic, racism is an uncontrolled chronic illness

By Dwain Tyndal

We are in the midst of a pandemic. People have been asking me how I am doing and it seems like a strange question. I'm OK. I'm breathing. My family is healthy.

Unfortunately, at the same time, our entire Alternatives for Community and Environment community continues to feel the aftershock of the murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade and so many others who have been oppressed and killed by racism and racist systems.

We stand with our youth, our elders and everyone in between who is rising up to demand justice.

While I am grateful for the attention that is being paid to racism right now, I'm also frustrated. TV talking heads, politicians and business executives are paying attention to racism this week, which is a good thing. But will it last? Will they still care in a week, a month, a year?

Racism in America is a pervasive problem, a chronic illness. What we saw in 2020—horrific recordings of police violence against Black folks, and the loud, angry response across the country—that's a bad flare-up. But treating the flare-up alone won't treat the underlying disease.

Racism isn't just a white policeman kneeling on a Black man's neck. Racism is Black and Brown people currently breathing polluted air. Racism is Black folks in Boston currently spend-

ing 64 more hours stuck on the bus than white folks, according to a 2019 study by the Livable Streets Alliance.

It's decades of housing policy that have left the average Black family in Boston with \$8 in wealth while the average white family has \$247,500, according to "The Color of Wealth in Boston," a 2015 report by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, Duke University and the New School.

Let's keep fighting the flare-up. Let's make sure we can use the energy of the moment to fight police violence against our communities. Let's also use some of this momentum for the long-term fight against the root cause - the chronic disease of racism.

For our community rooted in Nubian Square, that means fighting for transit justice. It means environmental justice, reduced pollution and cleaner water and more access to the good of the outdoors. It means housing justice and ending displacement. It means better employment opportunities, better training, justice in our education system.

Racism is a chronic illness. America only pays attention to it during a big flare-up. But to actually recover, to actually heal, you need to identify the causes of the disease and the hurt it causes every day, even when it's not top-of-mind, that's what we're hoping to do.

Dwain Tyndal is the executive director for Alternatives for Community and Environment.

Communities and families deserve true peace after police injustices

By Monalisa Smith

The unjust acts of violence against people of color by police officers, both nationally and locally, and the lack of justice that followed thereafter has left irreversible emotional and physical scars on communities of color.

How does police reform bring a sense of peace to victims of violence?

The recent passage of police reform legislation in Massachusetts could be seen as a step in the right direction. However, until those individuals who have been victimized by the police are given the power to effect change, this legislation does not get at the root of the issue for communities of color.

We need to make real impactful change that addresses the irreversible emotional and physical scars that people of color bear. And we need to do this to prevent these scars from being passed down to future generations - our youth.

Recently, I listened -feeling hopeless - to a mother who was seeking help for her son who was being harassed by the police. All I could say was: "File a complaint with the police internal investigation unit."

She and I both knew that her complaint would go nowhere. In fact, we both also know that the harassment her son was facing would likely increase as a result of her complaint.

MJE's youth program is designed to empower youth to be community leaders and to share their voices in the fight against violence. In MJE's youth program meetings, many of the youth would often share how the police would join them for a pickup game of basketball during the day, but then later that same evening the police would harass them on the streets as they hung out with their friends.

Communities of color watch our youth suffer from racial profiling and humiliation daily. Our youth are stopped by the police for simply 'living while black.' Our youth are forced to sit on the sidewalk curb as the police search their cars and persons. Our youth are forced to lay face down on the pavement, while in many incidences the police officer will rest their foot on their backs.

As we watched the murder of George Floyd, we heard the message loud and clear. Our young people are demanding, "take your foot off our backs." The passing of the police reform in Massachusetts unfortunately will not accomplish all that is needed to clear the hearts and minds of mothers, fathers and youth who live in fear of becoming the next George Floyd.

To see true police reform, this legislation needs to be accompanied by real action. This requires educating community members who have been

most impacted by the police officers about what this legislation means to them. We must see a shift in power by giving youth and parents space on the review committees. The government must also give those impacted, members of communities hardest hit, a seat at the table for planning, implementation and advocacy.

The emotional and physical scars of police brutality will never heal, but

there are tangible steps we can take to prevent the trauma of police brutality from being passed down to the next generation.

True peace is the presence of justice. Our communities and family deserve true peace.

Monalisa Smith is president and CEO of Mothers for Justice and Equality

February is Black History Month



"True peace is the presence of justice"
-Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King

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A VIEW FROM THE HILL

A commentary from a legislator on human services



We need Medicare for all today

By Sen. Jamie Eldridge

In 2006, Governor Romney and the Massachusetts legislature worked together to pass An Act Providing Access to Affordable, Quality, Accountable Health Care. Dubbed "Romneycare," the Act promised to provide subsidized insurance to anyone living under three times the federal poverty level. In 2006, that was \$29,000.

With support from healthcare advocates, businesses, hospital CEOs and the general public, the Legislature and Governor Romney managed to pass the bill in just three years. Massachusetts Health Reform has since been expanded through the Affordable Care Act, and in 2020 97.1 percent of Massachusetts residents have some form of health insurance.

However, despite that major accomplishment, it has become increasingly clear since 2006, that there is a difference between health insurance coverage, and actually getting healthcare.

As a Commonwealth we have chosen to focus on expanding health care coverage, but did absolutely nothing to curb the rising costs of care. As a result, in 2019, 32 percent of Massachusetts residents had difficulty accessing health care, 37 percent received unexpected medical bills, and 48% reported that they experience health care affordability issues.

Across the nation, individuals and families are paying thousands of dollars every year on health insurance plans. Despite that, far too many residents forego seeking treatment because of high co-pays and deductibles. Costs for individuals and families continue to rise leaving millions of Americans with crippling medical debt if they need life-saving treatment.

Think about that for a moment. People end up with massive debt because they were diagnosed with cancer. In the richest country in the world, the number one reason for a family filing for bankruptcy is related to healthcare expenses. And that's before the COVID-19 pandemic hit the country in 2020.

To address these failures in Massachusetts, I am filing alongside Representatives Lindsay Sabadosa and Denise Garlick, *An Act Establishing Improved Medicare for all in Massachusetts*, which declares that it is "the policy of the commonwealth to provide equitable access to quality, affordable health care services for all its residents as a right, responsive to the needs of the commonwealth and its residents, without co-insurance, copayments or deductibles."

By establishing the Massachusetts

Health Care Trust, the state alone will be responsible for the collection and disbursement of funds required to provide health care services for every resident of the Commonwealth instead of the current system where our money goes to multiple payers including health insurance companies.

When I first filed the Medicare for All bill years ago, I knew our healthcare system to be immoral for how it discriminates against people based on their resources. But after years of conversations with advocates and users, I now know it to be far worse. Our current healthcare system is cruel.

This cruelty extends to how we have allowed pharmaceutical companies to destroy families and communities by being an over-prescribed society. Big pharma has spent hundreds of millions of dollars to lobby lawmakers and regulators to make sure harmful drugs are prescribed even in cases where they are not needed.

The era of prioritizing business over patients needs to come to an end. We can no longer allow health care insurance and big pharma lobbyists to spend hundreds of millions of dollars each year to find ways to satiate their shareholders.

Economists agree that if we as a nation remove profit-driven health insurance companies as the intermediaries between patients and providers, costs for residents and businesses will significantly decrease.

By expanding the successful Medicare program to include all Americans, we will achieve the health care goals that many of us share, including universal coverage without co-pays and without needing to ask some health insurance executive for permission to seek treatment.

I believe that's why over 70 percent of Americans, including 52 percent of Republicans (as of 2018), now support Medicare for All.

It's time to make access to health care services a fundamental human right in Massachusetts.

By passing my Medicare for All bill, we can unify access for all people to all forms of medical treatment, including behavioral health services and sexual and reproductive health services, without suffering the burden of financial hardship and crippling debt.

Sen. Eldridge represents the Middlesex and Worcester districts.



Sen. Jamie Eldridge

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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State ramps up distribution of COVID-19 vaccines for congregate care providers



Gov. Charlie Baker looks on as Advocates CEO Diane Gould speaks about the vaccine needs of congregate care workers at a Jan. 13 press conference. About 94,000 people living and working in congregate care settings became eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine in January. Gould said: "It is a bright light in what has otherwise been a very dark time."

DIVERSITY: Council Committee outlines ambitious agenda for 2021

Continued from Page 1

tute; Dr. Gary Lyon, director of youth services, Centerboard, Inc.; Yolanda Nunes, BH CP program supervisor, Community Counseling of Bristol County; Andrew Dawley, chief operating officer, Community Counseling of Bristol County; and Dr. Albertina (Tina) Lopes, senior director of health-care systems, May Institute.

The panelists span the wide diversity of the Council's membership and came together to share stories and best practices on combatting racial and social inequities within their organizations.

In March, the Council plans to host an intensive two-day program, A Per-

sonal and Organizational Journey Towards Race Equity, presented by Barbara Holland, chief diversity officer, Advocates, and Comma Williams, founder, Comma Williams Enterprises

The program is designed to help participants examine their values, beliefs and biases and develop a framework to create a race equity action plan within their organizations.

The March program is currently sold out, but you can add your name to the waiting list or a future program.

If you are interested, please contact Providers' Council Education and Membership Associate Patrick Daily at pdaily@providers.org.



BUDGET: Gov. Baker's spending plan unveiled

Continued from Page 1

directs \$357.3 million towards efforts around substance misuse.

Line items in House 1 of particular interest to the human services sector include:

- MCB line item 4110-3010, Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind, dropped nearly 10 percent—from \$3.1 million to \$2.8 million - as funding was decreased to meet projected need.

- MRC line item 4120-6000, Head Injury Treatment Services, dropped 3 percent—from \$23.3 million to \$22.6 million.

- DYS line item 4200-0300, Residential Services for Committed Population, dropped 3.4 percent—from \$110.6 million to \$106.9 million.

- DTA line item 4401-1000, Employment Services Program, dropped 15.3 per-

cent—from \$16.7 million to \$14.1 million — as the line proposes eliminating FY '21 one-time costs.

- DPH line item 4512-0103, HIV/AIDS Prevention Treatment and Services, dropped 6.7 percent from \$30.5 million to \$28.2 million.

- DPH line item 4512-0200, Bureau of Substance Addiction Services, dropped 15 percent from \$168 million to \$142.8 million. The budget proposes eliminating FY '21 one-time costs, decreases funding to meet projected need, and the state believes it will have FY '21 funding left over to support programs in FY '22.

- DCF line item 4800-0200, Family Resource Centers, dropped 8.2 percent from \$17.5 million to \$16 million.

- DMH line item 5095-0015, Inpatient Facilities and Community-Based Mental Health, increased by 11.5 percent from \$229.4 million to \$255.8 million.

- DDS line items 5911-2000, Transportation Services, and 5920-2025, Community Day and Work Programs, saw funding transferred to DDS 5920-5000, Turning 22 Program and Services.

- DHCD line item 7004-0101, Emergency Assistance Family Shelters and Services, increased from \$185.8 million to \$195.9 million.

- ELD line item 9110-1636, Protecting Services, increased by 4.6 percent from \$34 million to \$35.6 million.

The full budget is posted online at www.mass.gov.

The Council will continue to track, analyze and regularly update human services budget line items at www.providers.org.

Questions about the FY '22 budget? Contact byelenak@providers.org.

WORKERS: signs spread essential message to public

Continued from Page 1

Ambassadors may be called on to speak with stakeholder groups, present testimony before a legislative committee, participate in public service announcements and more.

More information on the Essential Workers Campaign can be found on the Council's website at www.providers.org.

Would you like to purchase signs for your organization? Please reach out to Ravi Simon at rsimon@providers.org.

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For over 30 years, Providers' Council has enjoyed exclusive members-only rates on dental, life, disability and vision programs.

Program highlights include:

- 2 year rate hold effective April 1, 2020 through March 31, 2022
- Composite fillings will be covered the same as amalgam fillings
- New hire 3 month benefit waiting period has been removed

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS • WINTER 2021

What: **Members-Only Webinar: Best Practices for Organizing Engaging Online Events**
When: Thursday, February 4
Time: 2 p.m.
Where: via Zoom
Trainers: Lisa Rizzo, Program Manager, Human Service Forum
 Eliza Adams, Education and Academic Partnerships Coordinator, Providers' Council
Cost: Free for Council members

What: **Success as a New Supervisor SOLD OUT!**
When: Tuesdays, February 23 and March 9, 2021
Time: 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Where: via Zoom
Trainers: Jim Ognibene, Visioneer Consulting
Cost: \$140 members; \$200 non-members
(To be placed on the waitlist for this program, please contact pdaily@providers.org.)

What: **Working with People Who Present Challenges for Us**
When: Thursday, March 11
Time: 9 a.m.
Where: via Zoom
Trainers: Christine Singer, M.Ed, President, Your Personal Best: Workshops for Success
Cost: \$70 members; \$130 non-members

What: **Personal and Organizational Journey Towards Race Equity SOLD OUT!**
When: Thursdays, March 18 and March 25
Time: 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Where: via Zoom
Trainers: Barbara Holland, Chief Diversity Officer, Advocates
 Comma Williams, Comma Williams Enterprises
Cost: \$140 members; \$200 non-members
(To be placed on the waitlist for this program, please contact pdaily@providers.org.)

What: **Spring 2021 Certificate in Supervision Series**
When: Tuesday, April 20 to June 22
Time: 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Where: via Zoom
Trainers: Jim Ognibene, Visioneer Consulting
Cost: \$600 members; \$900 non-members

What: **Introduction to Disability, Ableism & Creating Inclusive Spaces**
When: Thursday, April 22
Time: 9 a.m.
Where: via Zoom
Trainers: Steve Slowinski, National Inclusion Manager, Partners for Youth with Disabilities
Cost: \$70 members; \$130 non-members

*Pre-registration for these events required unless otherwise noted.
 Visit www.provider.org/events to learn more and register.*

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



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