

THE PROVIDER

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The Newspaper of the Providers' Council

Summer 2025

Celebrates
50 Years of
Impact: Launch
of Providers'
eAcademy®

The Providers' Council is turning 50 in 2025! In celebration of this milestone, *The Provider* will be running a series of articles throughout the year commemorating some of the Council's most important milestones in its first 50 years. This month, the Council highlights the beginning of its online learning management system, Providers' eAcademy®.

eAcademy® provides the tools needed to educate all levels of staff and has helped Council members meet and exceed licensure and accreditation requirements while saving organizations money. Providers' eAcademy® is currently used by more than 50,000 users at over 100 agencies across Massachusetts.

The Council announced its the learning management system at its 29th Annual Convention in 2004. The program launched with over 100 courses. To help train entry-level staff, the Council also created the Direct Support Professional (DSP) Credentialing program, that included 12 modules of content to help educate employees who were new to the sector.

"We are excited about the inauguration of Provider's eAcademy® and the potential to build the capacity of our sector... I am confident that many providers will be thrilled with the potential to improve their workforce. The establishment of Providers' eAcademy® is moving our professional development to a higher level," said then-president and CEO of the Council, Michael Weekes, in the 2004 Convention issue of *The Provider* newspaper.

The program was established as part of one of the Council's longtime goals to enhance professional development within the sector. The two-year long development process included an intensive search into e-learning vendors, as well as creating a curriculum that would satisfy Massachusetts standards. Before development be-

eACADEMY®, see page 7

Cait Donovan to address burnout at Convention

Cait Donovan isn't just an international keynote speaker, an author, a podcast host and a recognized expert on burnout — she's someone with first-hand experience.

"I was working really hard, I didn't know how to ask for help, I was petrified by the weight of my student loans and paying them back in a currency that was worth one fourth of what the U.S. dollar was worth, and it became really overwhelming for me," Donovan said in an interview with *The Provider* in July. "I never really recovered. So, I was still tired and cranky and not feeling good... I was just sort of a mess all the time."

Donovan will bring her personal experience to the Providers' Council's 50th Annual Convention and Expo: *50 Years Together: Celebrating Today, Shaping Tomorrow* when she delivers the keynote address on Monday, October 6 at the Marriott Copley Place Hotel in Boston before nearly 1,200 friends of the community-based human services sector.

Burnout can significantly impact human services workers and interfere with their job of delivering critical care, causing some to even leave the sector. Donovan — host of "Fried: The Burnout Podcast" and author of *The Bouncebackability Factor*, will discuss strategies to understand burnout, its root causes and how people can begin to overcome it.

Donovan's career has been anything but linear — shaped in large part by ex-



Cait Donovan is a expert in burnout, host of "Fried: The Burnout Podcast," and author of *The Bouncebackability Factor*.

periences with burnout. A native of Fall River, she grew up determined to become a doctor and began her education at Boston University as a biology major. During her studies, however, she came to realize that medical school might not be where she would ultimately leave her

mark. As she grappled with this shift in her lifelong dream, she pivoted to focus on Chinese medicine and began studying acupuncture.

After college, Donovan traveled to Ar-

KEYNOTE, see page 7

Visible and vital: Caring Force Rally
resounds across Merrimack Valley

On Friday, June 6, nearly 150 enthusiastic and dedicated members of The Caring Force gathered at Northern Essex Community College for the fourth Caring Force Regional Rally of 2025. The event was an inspiring mix of appreciation and activism — honoring the unwavering efforts of human services professionals in Merrimack Valley while advocating for the essential support and resources they deserve.

This was the first rally held in the region and included powerful speeches, personal stories, and a call for fair wages, student loan relief, and better funding for the human services sector. The atmosphere buzzed with excitement as attendees raised their voices — not only for themselves, but also for the individuals and families they tirelessly support each day.

Advocates, Community Resources for Justice (CRJ), Justice Resource Institute



Josh Nye and Darleni Vlaun, the two Caring Force speakers at the rally, high five.

(JRI), Key Program, NFI Massachusetts, Seven Hills Foundation, Vinfen and Waystone Health and Human Services coordinated the regional event.

CARING FORCE, see page 7

Governor Healey
signs a \$60.9 billion
FY '26 budget

On July 4, Governor Maura Healey signed off on a \$60.9 billion annual budget, an increase of \$3.3 billion over fiscal 2025.

The budget includes \$207 million for the Chapter 257 Reserve, representing an increase of \$34 million, or nearly 19.65%, from FY '24. (*The Council compared the Chapter 257 line item to the FY '24 budget, rather than the FY '25 budget, because the number of Chapter 257 rates reviewed by EOHHS alternate in proportion every other year*).

The full text of the FY '26 budget is available online. The budget was signed a week after the Conference Committee released its \$61.01 billion

FY '26 BUDGET, see page 7

Bridge Over Troubled Waters welcomes new chief development officer Katie Amoro

On July 8, **Bridge Over Troubled Waters (Bridge)** announced the appointment of Katie Amoro as its new chief development officer. In this role, Amoro will lead all fundraising and development efforts to advance Bridge's mission of supporting vulnerable youth experiencing homelessness.



Katie Amoro

Prior to joining Bridge, Amoro served as the senior director of development at The Baker Center for Children and Families, where she led the implementation of a multi-year development strategy, strengthened donor engagement and expanded philanthropic partnerships to support the organization.

Square One welcomes Dr. Peter Morales as vice president of operations

On June 3, **Square One** welcomed Dr. Peter Morales to its leadership team as the agency's vice president of operations. In this role, Morales will oversee Square One's day-to-day operations, ensuring the efficient delivery of its mission and services, while playing a critical role in managing operations, optimizing processes, and ensuring the smooth functioning of internal systems and infrastructure.



Dr. Peter Morales

Prior to joining the Square One team, Morales served as senior vice president of innovation and technology/chief technology officer for Country Bank in Ware. In this role, he was responsible for driving process effectiveness, technology, security, data and AI strategy.

Thrive Support & Advocacy appoints Christopher Snell as quality & operations coordinator

On June 30, **Thrive Support & Advocacy**

announced the appointment of Christopher Snell as quality and operations coordinator. Snell will be responsible for developing financial, management and technological efficiencies and ensuring operational excellence in Thrive's residential and community-based programs.



Christopher Snell

Snell has over 15 years of leadership experience in the human services sector. Previously, he served as community administrator at Devereux Advanced Behavioral Health, overseeing community-based group home operations and managing the agency's annual budget. Prior to that, he was director of clinical services at Incompass Human Services, leading clinical operations for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and enhancing internal systems to more effectively serve individuals.

ABCD partners with the City of Boston and MassHire to bring a new career center to Nubian Square

Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD) recently hosted the grand opening of the MassHire Boston ABCD Career Center in Roxbury's Nubian Square along with community members, Boston Mayor Michelle Wu, Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development Secretary, Lauren Jones, and Boston Private Industry Council (PIC) Executive Director, Neil Sullivan.

The MassHire Boston ABCD Career Center is an expansion of ABCD's role in the workforce development arena with low-income communities. In 2020, ABCD became the operator of the MassHire Metro North Career Center with locations in Cambridge, Chelsea, Malden and Woburn.

"This new location at 10 Malcolm X Boulevard is further illustration of our commitment to be centrally and locally based in the communities with whom we have been collaborating since our inception in 1962," said ABCD president and CEO, Sharon Scott-Chandler.

Morgan Memorial Goodwill Industries celebrates *Creating New Lives for 130 Years!*



PHOTO BY GEOFFREY BASSETT

Creating New Lives for 130 Years! was the theme for *The Good Party*, **Morgan Memorial Goodwill Industries'** signature event. At the recent festivities, state Rep. John Moran presented a citation to Goodwill's CEO Joanne Hilferty from the Massachusetts House of Representatives in recognition of Goodwill's 130 years of service to the community. Morgan Memorial Goodwill is the first Goodwill, founded in Boston's South End in 1895. Goodwill provided job training and career services to more than 6,600 people last year.

Providers' Council members named in Worcester Business Journal's Power 100 List

Worcester Business Journal (WBJ) released its Power 100 List for 2025, a list dedicated to highlighting the most influential professionals in Central, MA. Three Providers' Council member CEOs were named as influential voices in the nonprofit sector: Diane Gould, **Advocates**; Mike Hyland, **Venture Community Services**; and Kathleen

Jordan, **Seven Hills Foundation**.

The Power 100 List, according to WBJ, "is an annual report on how power is shared and expended in Central Massachusetts each year, as told through the 100 people who are most effectively wielding their influence, with a special focus on those creating change and bringing new ideas to the forefront."

For more information on WBJ's Power 100 list or to view the full list, go to www.wbjjournal.com.

Be a Change-Maker

Join us to make a meaningful difference in the lives of people facing developmental, mental health, or other life challenges.

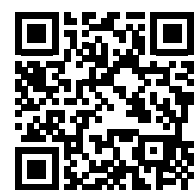
- ✓ Flexible Hours
- ✓ Tuition Assistance
- ✓ Generous PTO
- ✓ Career Growth



Advocates

Caring Partners. Creative Solutions. Better Lives.

Advocates.org/Careers



PROVIDER PROFILES

TURNING POINT, INC.

5 PERRY WAY • NEWBURYPORT, MA 01950 • 978.462.8251 • TURNINGPOINTINC.ORG

About the Agency

Turning Point, Inc., headquartered in Newburyport, MA, is a nonprofit organization committed to providing exceptional services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. With its team of dedicated employees, Turning Point strives to teach, empower and encourage individuals to be self-confident and to make positive contributions to their communities. In doing so, they remain committed to providing a safe and healthy environment on their journey.

Since opening in 1971, Turning Point has served adults with a wide variety of physical, emotional and behavioral challenges in the Merrimack Valley and North Shore areas of Massachusetts. They currently support over 150 individuals in 34 residences and about 25 individuals living on their own in 12 cities and towns. Additionally, for over 30 years, Turning Point has been a proven leader in providing intensive behavioral support/high intensity programs within community settings. They are the only organization north of Boston to provide forensic services and treatment for adults with intellectual disabilities and psychiatric diagnoses.

Turning Point receives the majority of its funding through service contracts with the Department of Developmental Services, with additional support from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, grants and private donations. As an organization, they continue to adapt and expand their programs based on the needs of the community, while remaining committed to providing exceptional care to individuals for the duration of their lives.

Turning Point, Inc. helps individuals achieve their goals through services

Turning Point, Inc. takes pride in the wide array of services it delivers to members of the community across the Merrimack Valley and North Shore. Spanning from Newburyport to Salem, it offers beautiful homes with 24-hour staffing, exceptional clinical supports and joyful community inclusion.

TRADITIONAL RESIDENTIAL PROGRAM MODELS

Turning Point emphasizes quality of life through person-centered involvement in activities such as art classes, concerts, attending the senior center, etc. Medical care is provided through trusted community partners. Turning Point's services are guided by personal goals. The organization works as a team to ensure it helps everyone achieve their dreams with enthusiastic support.

INTENSIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORT RESIDENTIAL PROGRAM MODELS

Turning Point also enlists additional support from clinical staff and board-certified behavior analysts to focus on teaching skills to overcome boundaries that may pose challenges to reaching goals. Through positive behavior supports and advocacy in court/legal involvement these programs help participants set the pace towards their vision of success.

DEAF/HARD-OF-HEARING SPECIALTY RESIDENTIAL PROGRAMS

Cornerstone service delivery for residential programs is achieved through the support of deaf/hard-of-hearing staff, ASL-fluent staff, and ASL interpreters.

TURNING 22 TRANSITION SERVICES

We help DDS, DESE, schools, families and young people navigate this major life transition from children's services to adult services. With detailed transition plans, Turning Point guides the young person through this transition process



Turning Point, Inc. offers clinical supports and community inclusion.

cess to help them be successful and happy starting day one.

INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT SERVICES MODEL

Participants live independently in their community. The organization provides support for a set amount of hours each week to assist in the areas they need most help with. Participants guide staff as to what services they would like them to deliver.

AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER SPECIALTY RESIDENTIAL PROGRAMS

The organization achieves all cornerstone supports through the aid of BCBA's, highly trained staff and the methodologies of ABA and PBS. With plans to focus on skill acquisition that overcome boundaries to success, Turning Point participants reach their goals.

STEP-DOWN RESIDENTIAL MODELS

Participants that have come from more restrictive environments have the opportunity to move to a less restrictive environment when they feel they are ready. Turning Point emphasizes skill building towards independence whether that be getting a driver's license, taking public transportation for work or managing their money or medication without assistance.

Executive Leadership

Alan Klein, M.S., is the president and CEO of Turning Point, Inc.



Alan Klein

Since 2020, he has demonstrated strong and visionary leadership by achieving several key accomplishments that have significantly strengthened Turning Point's mission and impact. Under his guidance, the organization has expanded its group homes and services, increased capacity and reached a greater number of individuals in need. At the same time, existing homes are undergoing thoughtful remodeling to improve comfort, safety and functionality.

Prior to Turning Point, he served as President of Robert F. Kennedy Children's Action Corps and deputy assistant commissioner for the Massachusetts Department of Youth Services.

Klein has also focused on modernizing communication efforts and revitalizing fundraising initiatives, with new strategies and campaigns helping to build awareness and secure essential resources. Strategic partnerships with other nonprofits have been established, fostering collaboration and sharing resources. Importantly, the organization continues to be a respectful and valued neighbor in all twelve cities and towns it serves.

Looking ahead, the CEO's vision for Turning Point is clear: every home will be fully accessible to accommodate an aging population, and all individuals will have access to fulfilling jobs and meaningful activities, ensuring dignity, inclusion and opportunity for all.

SALUTING THE CARING FORCE

Keanna Lumpkin: a compassionate listener and dedicated team member

Keanna Lumpkin has been a dedicated job coach and Medication Administration Program (MAP) coordinator at Valley Educational Associates for the past four years. With an associate degree in liberal arts and respiratory science, she continually participates in professional development to deepen her understanding of the individuals she supports.

In her role as a direct care staff member, Lumpkin brings both educational background and hands-on experience to provide enriching, community-based day services. She facilitates engaging group activities, implements positive behavior support plans and offers insightful feedback to the clinical team. Known for her calm demeanor and empathetic approach, Lumpkin excels at de-escalating challenging situations, serving as a positive role model for individuals learning emotional regulation. No matter how difficult the day may be, she remains upbeat and encourages everyone to participate with enthusiasm.

"Keanna is a good listener and is very understanding. She is someone I can go to when I need to talk to someone. I like how patient she is and that she is always willing to help me when I need it," says one of the individuals she supports.

Lumpkin's compassionate and consistent care has helped many individuals at Valley Educational Associates make progress toward their goals and increase their independence.

As MAP coordinator, Lumpkin ensures that all staff across the agency are properly certified. She conducts regular audits of medication rooms, verifies compliance with current policies and stays informed about any procedural updates. Her quick adaptability helps the agency navigate changes



Lumpkin brings hands-on experience to community-based day services.

smoothly and efficiently. When questions arise regarding medication administration, staff members know they can count on Lumpkin for accurate guidance and support.

Her collaborative spirit and positive attitude have made her a vital part of the team.

"As a respected member of our team Keanna uses her knowledge to assist newer staff become comfortable in their positions, says program manager, Amber Gibbs. "She demonstrates the level of care and dedication to our individuals every day that is a cornerstone of Valley Educational Associates."

When asked what inspired her to pursue a career in human services, Lumpkin shared, "It's an honor being surrounded by such wonderful people. I have always had a passion for helping others and a desire to make a positive impact in my community. Working in human services allows me to learn something new every day. I couldn't be more content with my career."

Julius Sanchez is a rising star at Mainstay Supportive Housing and Homecare

"He's only been with us for 5 months, but in a short period of time, he's made a huge impact on the lives of our clients," Larry Oaks, president and CEO of Mainstay.

Julius Sanchez is a lead home health aide at Mainstay Supportive Housing and Homecare, a Newton-based agency, and in short order he's made himself an integral part of Mainstay's Supportive Housing program. He provides compassionate, hands-on support to individuals who have been chronically unhoused, and he travels more than an hour to and from work every day to do this work. Julius ensures residents feel respected, safe and empowered in their homes because these are values that matter deeply to him.

In Sanchez's words, "I chose human services because I genuinely care about people and have a deep desire to make a difference in their lives. I've faced my own challenges, and those experiences have inspired me to help others who are going through similar struggles. Being able to support someone in their time of need means everything to me."

Sanchez is a reliable presence for his clients and provides assistance every day with the activities of daily living including meal preparation, light housekeeping, companionship and support. One client stated that Julius has helped them "learn to keep up after their place which has given me more self-confidence."

It's clear to Mainstay that he is passionate about making a positive impact on his client's daily lives. His direct



Sanchez is a reliable presence for his clients.

supervisor, Mainstay program manager, Jennifer Jutras noted that, "Julius consistently goes above and beyond to ensure his clients receive not just care, but genuine connection and respect. He often travels to different sites to ensure his clients are well supported. He radiates warmth, compassion, professionalism and his attentiveness, reliability, and kind heart have made a lasting impact on both our clients and his coworkers alike."

Sanchez was Mainstay's Employee of the Month in June of this year. As Sanchez continues in his role, Mainstay looks forward to seeing program participants continue to thrive under his care.



William Yelenak
President / Publisher

A budget is a reflection of our values

While government budgets are undoubtedly full of numbers, there's a phrase you'll often hear legislators and elected officials use to describe their spending plans.

"A budget is a reflection of our values."

It means those ones and zeros don't just represent the financial investment that the government is making — they also underscore the values of a city, a state or a country. When those we've elected to represent us put these spending plans together, they're more than just numbers — they're values.

And on July 4, 2025 — nearly 250 years after the Continental Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence in 1776 — Massachusetts Governor Maura Healey and President Donald J. Trump both signed spending plans that were, indeed, a reflection of values. And they couldn't have been more different.

Here in Massachusetts, Senate President Karen Spilka, House Speaker Ron Mariano and Ways & Means Chairmen Michael Rodrigues and Aaron Michlewitz sent Gov. Healey a budget that absolutely underscored the values of many Massachusetts residents. For us in the human services sector, one of the largest investments was the Chapter 257 Reserve, which was funded at \$207 million to make further investments in essential services and salaries for direct care workers, nurses, clinicians and others.

The Chapter 257 Reserve will continue to support benchmark salaries at the 53rd percentile of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, which means direct care workers — who fill many of the 160,000 jobs in the field — will receive median salaries approaching \$21/hour. Though we'll continue to support increased wages and retirement benefits being included for such dedicated professionals, this is an investment in our social safety net that provides services to hundreds of thousands of Massachusetts residents.

And our officials called out its importance too, as Gov. Healey and Chairmen Michlewitz and Rodrigues all highlighted the Chapter 257 investment in their budget messages, with Chairman Michlewitz calling it "a large and well-deserved increase for human service workers across the Commonwealth." In a statement, Gov. Healey talked about the state's values in crafting a budget.

"I'm grateful to the Legislature for their strong partnership and efficient work to develop and pass this budget for the people we serve," she said. "In Massachusetts, we are continuing to lead and do what we know works — focusing on lowering costs, protecting essential care and services, and moving our economy forward by investing in housing, transportation and our schools."

Contrast the message in Massachusetts with the one coming from Washington these days. The so-called "Big, Beautiful Bill" that was passed by Congressional Republicans and signed into law by President Trump will give tax breaks to the wealthy while slashing spending for domestic programs like Medicaid and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

New work requirements for those receiving Medicaid and SNAP create more government bureaucracy, and other requirements cap how much Massachusetts could tax providers to help pay the state's cost of coverage. Adults with children also have new work requirements to qualify for SNAP. And should the state's error rate for the program exceed 6 percent, Massachusetts will be on the hook for added costs to administer the program and pay for its benefits.

Some recent reports indicate that more than 325,000 people in Massachusetts may lose insurance coverage, and the additional costs to provide SNAP will also impact the Commonwealth as the state has 1.1 million residents — about one in six people statewide — who use the program. According to the National Network for Youth, the changes to Medicaid and SNAP are expected to "save" the federal government \$930 billion and \$156 billion over the next 10 years. But at what real cost — the health and well-being of the country's people?

And as more citizens may undoubtedly be less healthy and more hungry due to the impacts of the federal spending plan, the federal government is directing more resources to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to make it the country's largest interior law enforcement agency with a budget "higher than most of the world's militaries, including Israel's," according to a *Newsweek* report. Not only that, but we expect to see a loss of workers in our country as the administration terminated humanitarian parole for 530,000 individuals from Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua and Venezuela. At press time, the Trump administration announced it was ending Temporary Protected Status for Hondurans and Nicaraguans in the United States — following actions earlier this year to eliminate TPS for those from Haiti, Venezuela and Afghanistan.

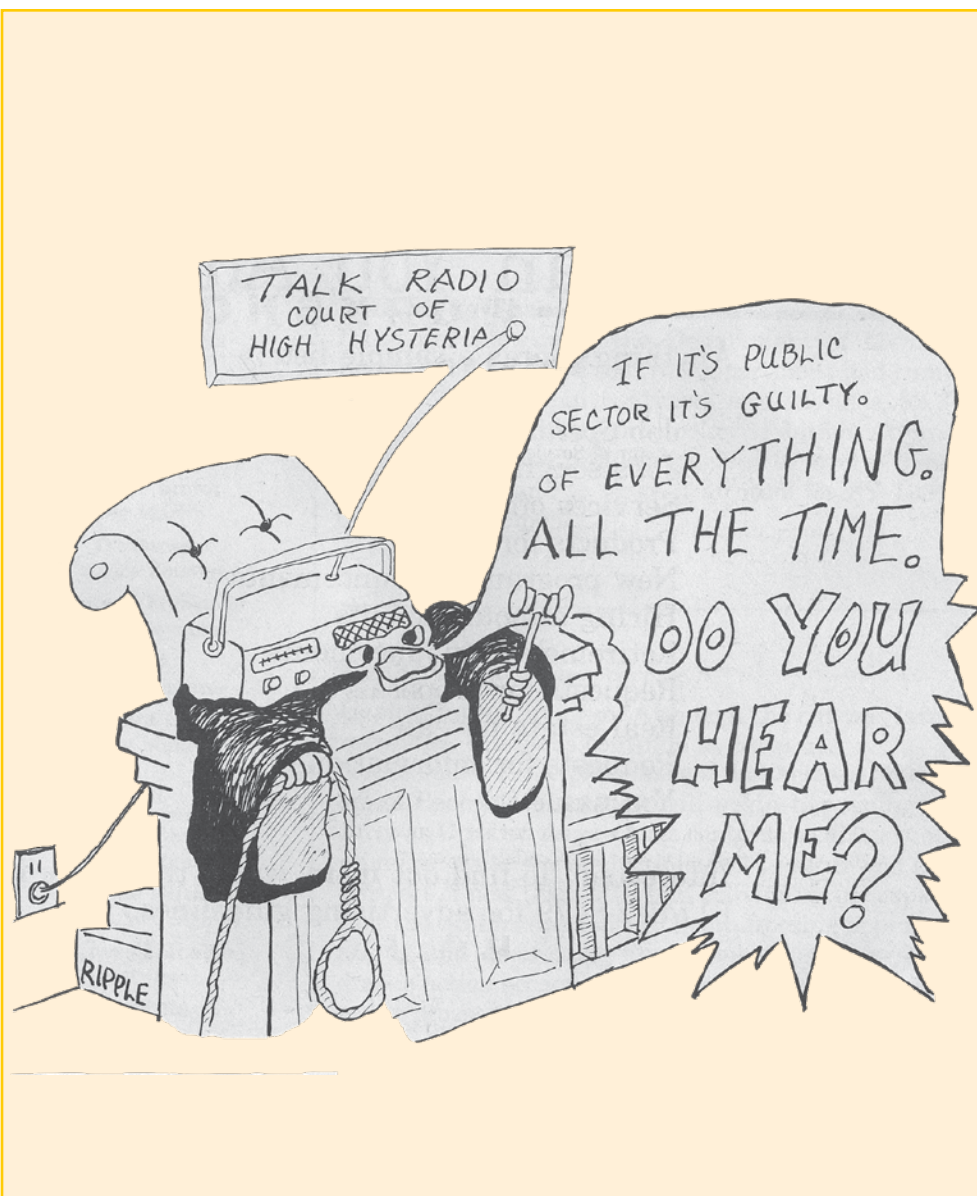
"A budget is a reflection of our values."

Do we share the values of a governor and legislative leaders who increase funding for community-based human services and the essential women and men who provide critical care?

Or the values of an administration that shreds its country's safety net while increasing its debt and spending on removing hard-working people living here who help make this country great?

President John F. Kennedy discussed values in one of his final addresses to the Massachusetts Legislature before becoming president: "Courage, judgement, integrity, dedication. These are the historic qualities of the Bay Colony and the Bay State ... And these are the qualities which, with God's help, this son of Massachusetts hopes will characterize our government's conduct in the four stormy years that lie ahead."

Indeed — nearly four more stormy years lie ahead. It's my hope that our elected officials in Washington will take a hard look at the values that make this country great and ensure it's a government working for all its citizens. Together, let's call for courage, judgement, integrity and dedication. And let's call for not just a budget — but indeed a government — that is a reflection of our values.



EDITOR NOTE: The Council is appreciative to our longtime cartoonist Michael Ripple, who drew his last cartoon for us in 2021. We'll share some of Michael's "greatest hits" this year, as well as highlighting artwork from members' program participants.

Want to highlight the artwork of your program participants?
Contact Maureen at mlynch@providers.org for more information.



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Speak out for civil rights and independence!

By Bill Henning

On July 23, the state’s disability community will rally and march in Boston — in the face of proposals in Washington, D.C. that would dismantle laws and programs fundamental to independence and integration — to mark the 35th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

“We will march not only to celebrate our rights but also to demand them,” said Dianna Hu, chairperson of the Boston Center for Independent Living, which is spearheading the event along with the Boston Commission for Persons with Disabilities.

Accessibility, inclusion and non-discrimination were set in statute and brought to the forefront of society when President George H.W. Bush signed the ADA into law on July 26, 1990, with the president firmly proclaiming, “Let the shameful wall of exclusion finally come tumbling down.”

But fast forward to today and we face extremely challenging prospects from the government in Washington, D.C.:

- There’s a proposal to weaken Section 504 of the Rehab Act, which was a foundational piece of the ADA.
- There are plans to slash funding for housing programs that support people with disabilities to stay out of shelters and spirit-killing nursing facilities. And there will be cuts nutrition programs, including SNAP.
- There will be changes to Medicaid that would restrict eligibility and reduce funding, inevitably chal-

lenging states’ ability to support vital home and community-based services such as the PCA program and community-based mental health supports, foundations of state compliance with the Supreme Court’s Olmstead decision.

After rallying at noon on the 23rd at City Hall Plaza, community members will march down Tremont Street to The Embrace monument on Boston Common, a sculpture honoring Dr. Martin Luther King and Coretta Scott King.

“The Embrace, per Embrace Boston, reflects the power of collective action, the role of women in the freedom movement and the forging of solidarity out of mutual empathy and vulnerability,” Hu said. “We may be in a moment resembling some of the great challenges the Kings confronted in the 1950s and 1960s, and we need to act in unison for disability rights.”

People with disabilities, family, friends, service providers, labor allies, civil rights advocates, public officials and others are encouraged to join events.

“It’s a time to speak out, and we should be fully aware that we very much face a major unfunded transference of responsibility to state government, which also will need to hear and understand the value of the ADA and the programs and services that underpin its promise of integration for people with disabilities,” Hu added.

For more information on this event, please visit <https://www.boston.gov/calendar/ada-35-boston>.

Bill Henning is the executive director for Boston Center for Independent Living.



Fun in the sun, for everyone: Special Olympics light up summer

By Rachel Kaprielian

Summer marks the start of the Special Olympics sports season, which kicks off each year with the Summer Games in early June and brings together athletes with disabilities from across Massachusetts. As the CEO of Triangle, Inc., a comprehensive disability services provider that reaches nearly 3,000 people each year, I see the positive impacts that sports and recreation have on the well-being of individuals with disabilities every day. Joining a team is more than mere exercise or recreation — practicing a sport, working towards a goal and supporting fellow athletes builds character and perseverance across all facets of life.

This year, I was honored and grateful to receive the Massachusetts Special Olympics John “Jack” Brett Champions Award, which recognizes long-standing advocacy on behalf of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities at the annual Mass Special Olympics Hall of Fame induction ceremony. I feel lucky to stand on the shoulders of so many pioneers who blazed a trail for inclusion long before opportunities for people with disabilities were common. When I began grammar school, disability inclusion had only recently become the norm thanks to those pioneers. My experience — that all my classmates should have every opportunity — set an expectation that I took with me into college, where I had the opportunity to start the Holy Cross chapter of Best Buddies — the second in the U.S. after the original cohort started at Georgetown by Anthony Shriver.

My upbringing and time in college shaped my fierce belief in inclusion that I brought with me as I was elected to public office and continued my career in government at the local, state, and federal levels. This lifetime of advocacy, policy making and exposure to possibility — including my lived experience as a parent of a neurodiverse young adult — came full circle last year when I was named CEO of Triangle, Inc. — a role that allows me to lead an innovative organization that emphasizes social and emotional development in addition to concrete employment and independent living skills.

The Special Olympics of Massachusetts share many of the same values as Triangle, Inc. As we support people in getting jobs, developing leadership skills and living healthy lifestyles as part of our day-to-day programming, Special Olympics is a wonderful add-

ed enrichment to our participants’ lives. It empowers them to build additional friendships and connections to their communities.

While the Summer Games mark the start of the season, athletes will be active all summer. This includes the Bashers, a Special Olympics softball team of athletes from Triangle’s programs, neighborhoods and towns who are led by a dedicated coaching staff of current and former staff members. This team makes room for everyone, no matter their ability on the ballfield, while fortifying the importance of teamwork and improving their skills ahead of the big tournament in August!

Additional recreational opportunities are fixtures of our summer programming at Triangle. People living in our residential homes also participate in weekend adaptive sailing programs with our friends at Piers Park Sailing Center in East Boston, where they learn to sail and skipper their own boat on Boston Harbor. We also partner with Save the Harbor/Save the Bay of Massachusetts to hold Beach: Ability — a day of accessible fun on Constitution Beach, where we highlight Massachusetts’ Department of Conservation and Recreation’s Universal Access Program that includes adaptive beach equipment such as mobi-mats, sand wheelchairs and floating wheelchairs. This year’s Beach: Ability event will take place on August 2nd — it is a free and public event where all are welcome! These programs have helped many lifelong Massachusetts residents experience the ocean for the first time after decades of being told that those activities simply “weren’t for you.” At Triangle, we instead say, “yes you can — we can adapt that for you!”

As hearty New England natives, we must enjoy the fun in the sun while we can before the cold creeps back in the fall. The Special Olympics Summer Games are a harbinger of the season. The athletes who compete share a spirit of competition with participants in other famous summer events like the Pan Mass Challenge and the Falmouth Road Race. Not only do they stand as symbols of the season, these events mark the true spirit of fun, inclusion and belonging that we should all be proud to celebrate.

Congratulations to all the athletes who competed in this year’s Summer Games — and cheers to a successful and joyous 2025 Special Olympics season!

Rachel Kaprielian is the president and CEO of Triangle, Inc.

Defending survivors and the sexual assault and domestic violence field in the face of federal attacks

By Hema Sarang-Sieminski

The work of supporting survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence (SA/DV) — and preventing future violence — is always evolving. Service providers and advocates, many of whom are survivors themselves, are constantly learning from each other, sharing best practices and identifying better ways to support all survivors seeking safety, healing and justice.

As a field, we move from a core understanding of how power and control are wielded to harm and silence survivors. Over the past several decades, we’ve grown in our collective intentionality around strategies that reflect the wide range of survivor identities and communities — centering survivors of color, LGBTQIA+ survivors, survivors in rural and urban areas, low-income and unhoused survivors and others. We know that when we create solutions for those with the least access to societal power, we promote healing, justice and a life-saving system change for all. Our focus on the now-politicized concepts of “diversity, equity and inclusion” is not about buzzwords, but a genuine commitment to building safer, freer, healthier communities.

That’s why it was so deeply concerning

— to us and to coalitions and advocates nationwide — when the administration in Washington, D.C. moved to block federal funding from supporting work that recognizes the diversity of survivor communities, calling it “illegal” and “immoral.”

For years, Jane Doe Inc. and other coalitions and providers across the country have accessed funding from the Department of Justice’s Office on Violence Against Women (OVW). This funding supports our 60 member organizations and survivors in Massachusetts — from training, technical assistance and membership support to community building. But this year, the DOJ attached vague, discriminatory requirements that would prevent providers from supporting survivors in the best ways they know how — and risk even greater harm for survivors already disproportionately targeted by violence.

For example, applicants were required to “certify” they would not use funds to promote or inculcate “gender ideology,” despite the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) expresses prohibition on gender identity discrimination. They were barred from operating “DEI” programs, despite VAWA’s mandate to serve underserved racial and ethnic groups. The DOJ also sought to restrict support for immigrant

survivors — even as aggressive, unaccountable immigration enforcement pushes them further into the shadows — and to prevent advocates from framing SA/DV as systemic or tied to social justice. These requirements fly in the face of federal law and make it nearly impossible to provide essential, often life-saving support.

Certifying these conditions would also expose programs to heightened enforcement risks under the False Claims Act — threatening them with criminal and civil penalties for allegedly misusing funds. These conditions and intended to dismantle decades of progress in this field that have been painstakingly informed by the expertise and wisdom of survivors.

In response, Jane Doe Inc. (JDI) joined with 16 other state coalitions to challenge these conditions in federal court in Rhode Island. The lawsuit, filed in federal district court in Rhode Island in June, seeks immediate relief to prevent the administration from imposing these unlawful, vague, and dangerous restrictions on OVW funding. The coalitions that are plaintiffs in the case come from every corner of the country — both “red” states and “blue” states — and share the conviction that we will not allow ill-informed, politically-motivated policies

to stand in the way of supporting survivors and addressing the root causes of sexual assault and domestic violence.

Our legal team — Democracy Forward, Jacobson Lawyers Group, ACLU of Rhode Island, National Women’s Law Center and others — has already secured an agreement with DOJ allowing coalitions and providers to apply for grants this cycle without certifying the damaging requirements. We remain committed to seeing this case through, to protect against these threats re-emerging in future grant cycles and to bring clarity to advocates who’ve faced months of uncertainty.

At the end of the day, our work — at Jane Doe Inc., with our members, and across the country — is driven by the needs of survivors and the determination to create safer communities for all. We will always stand with survivors, advocates and partners who are committed to safety, healing and justice. By uplifting and protecting those most targeted by violence, we build a more sustainable, effective path to healing for everyone — and we reject attempts to undermine this work for political gain.

Hema Sarang-Sieminski is the executive director of Jane Doe Inc., the Massachusetts Coalition Against Sexual Assault and Domes-

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A VIEW FROM THE HILL

A commentary from a legislator on human services



It's time to stand up for human services workers

By Rep. Adrienne Ramos

On June 6, 2025, I was honored to have made closing remarks at the first ever Merrimack Valley Rally with The Caring Force. To have been a small part of such an inspiring event was such a joy. I was able to meet with so many advocates, constituents and partner organizations in a short amount of time.

Advocates, Community Resources for Justice, Justice Resource Institute, NFI Massachusetts, The Key Program, Seven Hills Foundation, Vinfen and Waystone Health and Human Services all have been supporting The Caring Force in a powerful way, by uplifting and standing for the Commonwealth's human service workers.

Human service workers across Massachusetts, whether in childcare, elder care, mental-health support or disability services, play a vital role as the Commonwealth's "other first responders." With roughly 150,000 individuals employed in this sector, they form the backbone of community well-being, servicing everyone from families in crisis to adults with disabilities. These roles not only provide essential care by ensuring safety, stability and independence, but also drive local economies.

Over the past few years, I unexpectedly became a part time caretaker for my uncle, who has spent time in rehabilitation facilities, nursing homes and now an assisted living home. I've experienced and witnessed firsthand the enormous impact human service workers have on peoples' lives.

Those workers made mine and my family's lives so much easier. They helped guide us on where to go, what to do and how to do it. They even approached the basics with so much grace, humility and care for the families they impact. I can't thank them enough for not only the advice they gave, but for the pressure they lifted off our shoulders.

Their work allows parents to pursue employment, supports vulnerable seniors, manages behavioral health challenges and offers housing and developmental assistance — underscoring their centrality to the social and economic fabric of the state. The compassion and patience these workers show while facing increasing scrutiny and criticism should be commended, not discarded.

Yet the human services sector in Massachusetts faces chronic work-

force shortages that threaten communities across the Commonwealth. Despite growth in demand and service providers, staffing levels have dropped significantly, wages remain low and the impact is felt disproportionately by women and people of color, resulting in staggering turnover rates.

Everyone knows how unaffordable everything is right now. Things that are so basic like rent and groceries seem impossible to provide. And the brunt is unfortunately being felt by our most vulnerable communities, including those working in the human services sector.

That's why I am a proud cosponsor of both bills on The Caring Force legislative agenda — H.223, *An Act relative to a loan repayment program for human services workers*, and H.283, *An Act relative to a livable wage for human services workers*.

H.223 would provide student loan repayment to human services workers who provide essential services to hundreds of thousands of people across the Commonwealth. H.283 would 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.

As a community, we have placed value on providing livable wages and loan forgiveness to teachers. It's time we do the same for human service workers, who touch the lives of families and leave lasting impressions in much the same way as teachers. Without investment in competitive compensation, career development, and equity-centered workplace practices, Massachusetts risks compromising the quality and availability of care for its most vulnerable residents.

Human service workers are asking for humanity and equality, things they bring to their jobs every single day. It's time for us to show up for them. By passing these bills, we would be closing the gap in pay and giving our industries an opportunity to recruit and keep a vital and caring workforce.

Representative Adrienne Ramos represents the 14th Essex District, which includes the towns of Boxford, Groveland, North Andover, West Newbury and the city of Amesbury.



Rep. Adrienne Ramos

This 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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FY '26 BUDGET: Governor signs \$60.9 billion budget

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budget proposal for fiscal year 2026. Gov. Healey reduced the Conference Committee's budget proposal by \$130 million, which included cuts to several human services line items the Council tracks:

- **EHS line item 4000-0051** – *Family Resource Centers* – was reduced by \$500,000 to a total of \$0.
- **MassHealth line item 4000-0641** – *Nursing Home Supplemental Rates* – was reduced by \$25 million to a total of \$625.07 million.
- **MCB line item 4110-1000** – *Community Services for the Blind* – was reduced by \$300,000 to a total of \$8.8 million.
- **DPH line item 4512-0200** – *Bureau of Substance Addiction Services* – was reduced by \$2.5 mil-

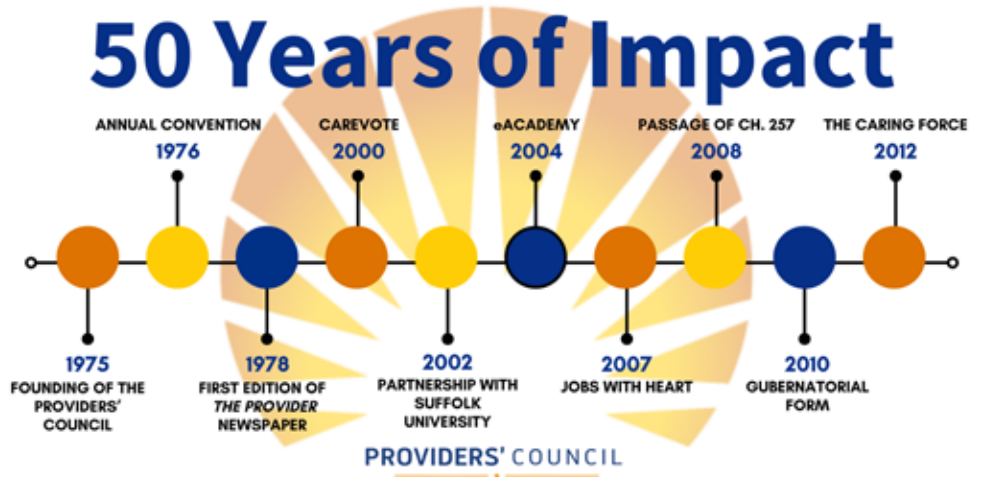
lion to a total of \$184.6 million.

- **DPH line item 4513-1020** – *Early Intervention Services* – was reduced by \$1.5 million to a total of \$37.7 million.
- **DMH line item 5055-0000** – *Forensic Services Program for Mentally Ill Persons* – was reduced by \$1.5 million to a total of \$17.4 million.
- **DMH line item 5095-0017** – *Loan Forgiveness Program* – was reduced by \$3 million to a total of \$0.

The Providers' Council is reviewing the budget for other major changes to human services accounts or line items.

The Providers' Council budget analysis is located on the Council's website www.providers.org. If you have questions about the FY '26 budget or the budget process, please reach out to Caroline O'Neill at coneill@providers.org.

eACADEMY®: Council launched online learning platform in 2004



The Council worked for over two years to create the online learning platform that would become eAcademy®.

Continued from page 1

gan, the Council's Workforce Committee created a Professional Standards Board to review 12 nationally recognized standards for human services training. The board eventually settled on adapting a curriculum from the State of California to fit the Massachusetts specification.

"In order to recruit and retain qualified direct care professionals, the Council's workforce committee recognized the need to offer them a career pathway as well as opportunities to enhance their skills," said David Jordan in 2004. At the time, he was the president and CEO of Seven Hills Foundation and the chair of the Council's Workforce Committee.

By 2007, eAcademy® had presented its 1,500th credential and launched over

885 new courses. The program's rapid growth cemented its place as one of the Council's key educational offerings.

Today, the Council has expanded its online library to a catalog of over 1,400 courses. The online learning platform also now includes options for managers to create and assign training plans – of course still includes the DSP Credentialing Program, which is now known as the Human Services Credentialing Program.

As the Providers' Council enters its next 50 years, eAcademy® remains one of the cornerstones of its ALEX platform. For more information on eAcademy® or a demonstration of the learning management system, please contact Amanda Dellea-Rheume at arheume@providers.org.

CARING FORCE: Merrimack Valley Rally brings community together



Caring Force member Darleni Vlaun addresses the crowd at the first Merrimack Valley Regional Rally.

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Brad Howell, president and CEO of Waystone, brought an upbeat and energetic attitude to the podium as the event's emcee.

"Together we are all part of The Caring Force," said Howell. "The Caring Force works to empower those who care about the human services sector for a critical purpose: to advance action to protect our most vulnerable neighbors, ensure access to opportunities to live all the way live with dignity and purpose, and create a stronger economy with the pay, recognition and respect human service workers deserve."

The rally's centerpiece was two incredible speakers: Josh Nye from Vinfen and Darleni Vlaun from Advocates. Both shared powerful stories about their experiences working in the sector, serving as moving reminders that the work of human services professionals goes beyond a job — it is a lifeline for countless individuals.

Nye shared that he struggled for nearly a decade to make a livable wage, working long hours, navigating long commutes and getting multiple jobs to support himself and his family, all while repeating the mantra, "I do this for the community, not myself." But like so many others have asked, he wondered why he should have to sacrifice a livable wage to do the work he loves.

"Fair compensation is not just about financial stability; it is about dignity," said Nye. "It is about ensuring that human service workers can support their families, pursue further education and maintain their mental and physical health."

Vlaun, like Nye, recounted her story of finding her calling through the work of human services, but struggling to do the work she loves. She stated that she has worked multiple jobs, sacrificing time with her family, including her six-year-old child with special needs. She added that the mental load of not just caring for others but providing

for themselves and their families is what creates so many of the mental health issues human services professionals face today.

"We talk a lot about mental health today and that's a good thing. But what we rarely talk about is the mental health of the workforce that provides those services," said Vlaun. "Many of us are burnt out. We experience anxiety, depression, vicarious trauma and the very conditions we treat in others. We pour ourselves into this work, and we do it with care, but it comes at a personal cost."

State Representative Andy Vargas (3rd Essex) delivered thoughtful remarks, referencing the importance of *An Act relative to a student loan repayment program for human services workers* (S.119 | H.283) and *An Act relative to a livable wage for human services workers* (S.130 | H.223) and how the bills would transform not just workers' lives, but the well-being of entire communities.

"Chapter 257 was created to ensure fair, sustainable for services that are not optional; they are essential," said Vargas. "But the need continues to outpace the investment and we're asking for more of you every single year while the resources too often fall short — that is a gap we must close."

State Representative Adrienne Ramos (14th Essex) and Haverhill Mayor Melinda E. Barrett, both shared powerful messages of support for the sector. U.S. Representative Seth Moulton also shared a video message with the crowd, pledging his support for the Council's legislative agenda, stating that the human service workers in our communities are vitally important to not just the Commonwealth, but the country.

"The truth is, if we want a more just and compassionate society, then we must value the human services sector," Moulton said. "And that starts with caregivers like you."

The next Caring Force rally will be the Western MA Regional Rally on September 9! For more information, or to RSVP for the rally, please visit www.thecaringforce.org.

KEYNOTE: Donovan to address crowd at 50th Annual Convention

Continued from page 1

gentina, where she met her future husband, a Polish man. The couple eventually moved to Poland, where Donovan broke new ground as the first practitioner to use acupuncture in fertility clinics. But as her career soared and her client list expanded, Donovan found herself struggling to manage the stress that came with her growing success. An article in the Harvard Business Review on the signs of burnout finally revealed that she was experiencing something much larger than stress.

"I went 'Oh, check, check, check — oh no,'" Donovan said as she recounted her reaction to reading the article. "When I realized I was burnt out, it was the first time in my life that I thought, 'I know more about stress than most people on the planet, I literally studied how stress affects the body for four years straight... so I don't know what to do with this, if I haven't figured this out by now, I need outside help.'"

Donovan made several big life changes — including moving back to the United States, getting herself a therapist and hiring a nutritionist to help her body heal. Most significantly, she took a step back from acupuncture to pursue a new line of study: burnout.

"The number one thing that I need people to know is that ... burnout is not your fault," she said.

Throughout her career, Donovan has explored how burnout can negatively impact a person's life, but healing from it can bring a wealth of positivity to not just that person, but everyone they touch. This philosophy is why she feels it is so important for human services workers to understand the nature of burnout.

"People that choose [human services] are statistically more inclined to burnout... A lot of people that choose this work have histories that led them to choose this work, but those same histories will make them vulnerable to burnout," Donovan said. "Understanding where it truly comes from, all the



Donovan began to study burnout after her own experiences.

things that are involved in it... will allow people to be a little more gentle towards themselves.

"In order to heal your own burnout, you have to look to your past," said Donovan. "You cannot get through it without going backwards first."

In addition to delivering the keynote address, Donovan will also host two breakout sessions on burnout during workshop blocks to allow attendees to have a more in-depth exploration of the topic with her.

Early-bird registration for the Council's Annual Convention & Expo is now available until Monday, August 25. For more information or to reserve your spot, please visit www.providers.org. Send any questions to convention@providers.org.






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