## Senior Action Leader



### A VOICE FOR SENIORS AND THEIR FAMILIES

**Published by the Massachusetts Senior Action Council** 

www.MassSeniorAction.org

Summer 2022

### MA Election Begins In August with Primary Voters Nov. Election will decide Ballot Question, Governor, all state races.

The Massachusetts 2022 primary election is on September 6, 2022, and the general election is on November 8, 2022, but many voters will request their absentee ballots and begin voting in August.

Voters will choose the next Governor, Attorney General along with all top state offices and there are many contested state representative and senate races across the Commonwealth. Many of these races will be determined by the September primary vote, so keep in mind the primary is as important as the November election.

In November, Massachusetts voters will have an opportunity to finally fix roads, bridges, public transportation and invest in public education by passing a ballot question that will designate revenue for these projects.

The ballot question, known as "The Fair Share Amendment", would create a 4 percent tax on annual income above \$1 million and dedicate the funds raised to transportation and public education. Only people who earn more than \$1 million

### **2022 Early Voting Periods**

September 6, 2022 State Primary:
August 27 – September 2
November 8, 2022 State Election:
October 22 – November 4



annually will be impacted; 99% of us won't pay a penny more. And we'll all benefit from better schools, roads, bridges, and public transportation.

While the rich got richer during the COVID pandemic, working families and small businesses are still getting hit hard. The Massachusetts economy is working great for those at the top, but that prosperity isn't reaching all of us. As we come out of the pandemic, we need to make our tax system fairer in order to grow our economy and make it work for everyone.

As we recover from COVID, we need investments in our public schools to help students get back on track and ensure that all students have

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#### **Contact Information:** Main Office/Eastern MA

108 Myrtle St. Suite 112 Quincy, MA 02171

617-284-1275- New Number

www.MassSeniorAction.org

**Executive Director:** Carolyn Villers Cvillers@MassSeniorAction.org

All meetings are virtual due to COVID-19. Contact an organizer to join.

#### **Chapter Meeting Information: BOSTON CHAPTER**

**'hen**: 2nd Thursday of the month at 1:00 pm **Location:** Charles St. AME Church 551 Warren Street, Dorchester

#### **CAMBRIDGE/ SOMERVILLE CHAPTER**

When: 3rd Friday of the month at 11:30 am **Location:** Cambridge Senior Center 806 Mass Avenue, Cambridge

#### NORTH SHORE CHAPTER

Location: 10 Church Street, Lynn

#### **METRO NORTH CHAPTER**

When: 4th Wednesday of the month at 1:30 pm Location: Malden Senior Community Center 7 Washington Street, Malden

#### **GREATER SPRINGFIELD CHAPTER**

When: 4th Wednesday of the month at 1:00 pm **Location:** Springfield Hobby Club 309 Chestnut Street, Springfield

#### **BRISTOL COUNTY CHAPTER**

When: 4th Thursday of the month at 1:00 pm **Location**: Greenwood Terrace, Westport Housing Authority 666 State Road, Westport NORTH SEACOAST AFFILIATE Meetings paused. Members will receive monthly updates.

#### Social Media:

Twitter: @SeniorActionMA

Facebook: www.facebook.com/MassSeniorAction When: 3rd Wednesday of the month at 11:00 am

#### **CONTRIBUTORS:**

Edna Pruce - MSAC President Carolyn Villers - MSAC Executive Director Pam Edwards - MSAC Organizing Director Tracey Carpenter - MSAC Organizer Claudia Pérez - MSAC Organizer Eric Holmberg - MSAC Organizer Jake Tabor - MSAC Organizer Shayla Fonfield - MSAC Asst. Organizer Joanne Paul, photography

#### STATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Edna Pruce, President Kathy Paul, 1st Vice President Rosa Bentley, Treasurer John Ratliff, Secretary Karen Lynch, Membership Coordinator Elaine Correia, Bristol County Delegate Bernice Ezell, Gr. Springfield Delegate Paulette Spriggs-Durrett, Boston Delegate

#### MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

#### Enclosed are membership dues for:

□\$10 1-year individual	□\$15 1-year couple	□\$50 individual	lifetime □\$	75 couple lifetime
NAME(s):				
ADDRESS:				APT #:
CITY:		STATE:	ZIP:	
PHONE:	EM	IAIL:		

Yes, I would like all notices sent by email, instead of postal mail, including this quarterly newsletter. Make checks payable to: MSAC, Mail to: Mass Senior Action, 108 Myrtle Street, Suite 112, Quincy, MA 02171

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT by Edna Pruce

This has been a very busy and productive quarter with several successes. People power has really been at work.

In Feb. we met with Senator Elizabeth Warren's Health Care staff member to discuss the realities of senior health care, the work we are doing with the MSP and to ask for her support.

In April we visited the State House making visits to legislators on the 6, 12, and 14 th. handing out literature for the MSP expansion. Also In April MSAC Director Carolyn Villers was appointed to Mayor Wu's Housing Task Force because of the work MSAC members have done around housing affordability and development.

On May 5 the MSP committee met with the staff of The Ways and Means Committee. Throughout April and May the MSP committee members were phoning legislators requesting support for the expansion of the Medicare Savings Program. On May 11th we held a Rally on the steps of The State House where Sen. DiDomenico and I spoke, followed by visits to all the Senate Offices by members with boxes of Cracker Jacks asking for our legislators to, "Hit a home run by expanding MSP", and info about how many of their constituents would benefit

from raising the income and asset limits.

Another success, In June the Lawsuit between Monty Gold, Turtle Swamp and the Jamaica Plain Community was settled. All 38 Units of senior housing will be built and the restaurant will be able to stay in the location. MSAC members distributed Flyers on numerous occasions at the T station in the area and in the neighborhood. MSAC went to the root of the problem and changed the zoning policy used by Mr. Gold to halt this needed housing.

After three years of persistent activism, Lynn Members were successful in getting a Senior Center for the area seniors. People feel the building is beautiful, and the new staff hired are a great asset for the community.

In June we testified in the City of Boston's Transfer Fee Hearing before the State Revenue Committee supporting an act relative to real estate transfer fees and senior property tax relief. If passed, Boston Seniors will see lower property taxes. The North Shore chapter was successful in getting the city of Lynn to triple the abatement for senior property owners, the first change to the tax in over 20 years!

Another one of our successes



has been with the MSP. We started by requesting 200% fpl (\$2265.00 per month single, \$3052.00 couple) which the Governor offered in his budget. MSAC shared stories of the cost burden of their healthcare so we were thrilled when The House raised it to 250% (\$2851.00 single per month) and the Senate offered 225% fpl (\$2548.00 single per month). We are awaiting the final results from the Conference Committee part of the budget.

Again, I must tell you how much I love my MSAC Brothers and Sisters. I stand beside these social justice warriors beaming with pride of what we are able to accomplish together. Here is to People Power and continuing to not take it but take charge!

# Mass Senior Action Council has a new phone number: 617-284-1275. Same Location, just new number.

**MISSION:** As a democratic, grassroots, senior-run organization, Massachusetts Senior Action is committed to empowering seniors and others to act collectively to promote the rights and well-being of all people, but particularly vulnerable seniors.

## Road Safety Signed Into Law!

#### MA now 17th state with undocumented drivers license

The state Senate joined the House Thursday in overriding a veto by Gov. Charlie Baker and authorizing driver's licenses for undocumented immigrants. The final vote in the Senate was 32–8 to approve the bill over Baker's objection.

The new law will allow immigrants without legal status to apply for a standard state driver's license beginning July 1, 2023. It prohibits the Registry of Motor Vehicles from asking about or keeping documents related to immigration status.

"This is a well-vetted piece of legislation. We've gained support from a wide range of stakeholders over the course of a number of years," said lead sponsor Sen. Brendan Crighton ahead of the vote on Thursday. "Our lives are safer when every single driver has to pass a road test, a vision test, and obtain insurance."



Proponents said the measure will improve road safety and assuage immigrants' worries of being revealed as undocumented and face deportation because of a routine traffic stop or accident.

The original version of the bill was introduced almost

20 years ago, and multiple iterations have cropped up and failed.

The measure is about being safe on the road, according to Elizabeth Sweet, executive director of the Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition.

"By making all immigrants eligible for a driver's license, we make it possible for all drivers to drive in a safe, secure manner," she said.

"We know in other states that have passed this bill, passed a form of driver's licenses for immigrants, that hit-andrun accidents go down by 10 percent," Senate sponsor Brendan Crighton of Lynn/ Nahant announced at a May rally at the state house.

After implementing a similar law, Connecticut saw a reduction of hit-and run crashes, and a decline in the number of people found guilty of unlicensed driving, an investigation by the GBH News Center for Investigative Reporting found. By 2019, 50,000 undocumented immigrants had taken written exams, vision tests, and road tests to get drivers licenses.

"We sat down with the chiefs and asked what their concerns were and worked with them. We did change some of the bill and made sure that we're really clear on the types of documents people need to provide to get licenses," said Rep. Christine Barber, lead co-sponsor of the House bill.

To apply for a driver's license,



immigrants will have to show two documents proving their date of birth and identity, like an unexpired foreign passport, or certified copy of a birth certificate.

Governor Baker raised concerns earlier this year that people would be registered to vote due to interconnected functions at the Registry of Motor Vehicles.

Secretary of State Galvin, the state's top elections official, emphasized this bill is about driving — not about voting.

Galvin said Baker is relying on a national Republican talking point, "We've definitely spoken with the Registry of Motor Vehicles, and we can solve any concern there is about this," Galvin said of the state's automatic voter registration law. "But this bill should be signed ... His (Baker's) concerns are baseless.

This law will now enable all qualified state residents to apply for a standard state driver's license, regardless of immigrant status, while keeping our Commonwealth in full compliance with REAL ID requirements. It has been endorsed by over 230 organizations, including the Mass. Major City Chiefs of Police, as well as dozens of businesses.

## Senior Housing Victory in Jamaica Plain. 38 units move forward after lawsuit settles.

The Boston Zoning Board of Appeals June 7, ruling should end a lawsuit that had blocked construction of a proposed-39-unit senior apartment building next to Turtle Swamp Brewing on Washington Street in Jamaica Plain.

Mass Senior Action Council and City Life Vida Urbana led the charge to inform the community land barren Monty Gold and Turtle Swamp Brewery owner, John Lincecum filed a lawsuit to stop the plan to build the affordable housing resulting in the housing being tied up in court for over one year.

The board approved a plan by non-profit developer New Atlantic Development to construct the five-story apartment building for the Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Corp. five feet away from the property line with the brewery, rather than right up to the property line. MSAC members heard rumors this land grab was Gold's plan from the beginning. MSAC 1st Vice President Kathy Paul shouted to the crowd at the April rally, "This is not about a zoning ordinance. This is about a greedy person using this housing to see what he can get out of it. Gold sits back in his castle while seniors fight for space in shelters."

To keep the same number of apartments, New Atlantic will shrink an "inset"that was designed to visually break up the building's "wall" along the brewery property line, New

Atlantic owner Brian Goldson told the board before its vote to approve what it considered only minor changes to the project. He added that while this will mean the elimination of a small courtyard, it will also let the company put in windows on that side of the building. MSAC state board member Karen Lynch addressed the lost courtyard when hearing the news of the settlement, "Once the units are completed the residents should go over and sit at the Turtle Swamp patio and tell them, "this is our courtyard".

While the MSAC housing activists are upset that greedy people were allowed to grab land from the project, we are thrilled the entire 38 units will move forward and celebrate how MSAC worked with Boston City Councilors Bok and O'Malley to go to the root of the problem and change the ordinance Gold used to halt this housing.

In addition to the apartments, the new building will have space for El Embajador restaurant, which now sits in the site's current low-rise building. MSAC Boston member Roberto Lobos, "this restaurant is very important to this neighborhood. I am so happy they will be able to stay right where they are."

Once again, MSAC is proof your participation matters!

To get in the action contact MSAC: 617-284-1275 or info@masssenioraction.org

# A Year Of Action: MSAC Fought Greed and WON!











## Medicare Savings Program Expansion Win!

Beacon Hill leaders are moving to expand a Medicare-backed savings plan in a move that advocates say will help tens of thousands of elderly residents to afford rising health care and prescription drug costs. This is the result of five years of non-stop advocacy by the Mass Senior Action Council.

Tucked into a nearly \$50 billion state budget for the next fiscal year are plans to expand the income eligibility requirements for the Medicare Savings Program, which pays a portion of health plan premiums and deductibles for qualifying seniors.

The House budget plan, approved in April, calls for expanding coverage to include individuals 65 and older whose income doesn't exceed 250% of the federal poverty level (\$2851 single or \$3835 couple). The state's current limit is 165% (\$1774 single or \$2390 couple) of the federal poverty level to qualify for the program.

The Senate approved a similar provision last week in its version of the spending plan, calling for raising it to 225% (\$2548 single or \$3433 couple) of the poverty level. and Gov. Charlie Baker had proposed to raise the limit to 200% as part of his preliminary budget plan, filed in January.

To be sure, the spending package won't be finalized for several weeks, and details must be worked out by a conference committee. But the apparent consensus between the executive and legislative

branches on proposed changes to the Medicare program means they will likely survive the budget process in some form.

Senior advocates, who have pushed for the changes for years, are praising the plans, but want lawmakers to go further. They are calling on legislative leaders to adopt the House plan, giving Massachusetts the highest eligibility threshold in the

nation and helping address the "healthcare cliff" faced by many seniors.

"We must not stop with this milestone," said Edna Pruce, president of the Mass Senior Action Council. "We still need to address the low asset limit that penalizes low-income seniors who worked hard to build modest savings for retirement." Contact MSAC to see if you qualify: 617-284-1275

We are asking the
Conference
Committee to
adopt 250%FPL,
the House Budget
Version for the
Medicare Savings
Program.
(we will continue
the fight to
address the asset
test.)



#### Current Eligibility:

\$1,869/mo. Single \$2,518/mo. Couple

#### Assets:

\$16,800 Single \$25,200 Couple

#### House FY23:

\$2,851/mo. Single \$3,835/mo. Couple No update on Asset Limit

## What We Need Raised Asset Limit: California recent:

\$130,000 Single \$195,000 Couple

#### Maine:

\$50,000 Single or \$75,000 per couple

#### No Asset Test:

AL, AZ, CT, DA, LA, MI, NM, NY, OR, VT, D.C.

#### **CURRENT EXPANSION VICTORY:**

The FY20 budget expanded eligibility of Medicare Savings Programs (MSP) from 135% FPL (~\$1,549/mo.) to 165% FPL (\$1,889/mo.), the first step on our staircase to ending the senior health care cliff at 300% FPL. 20,000 seniors qualified for health care assistance!

#### ADOPT HOUSE FY23 BUDGET:

The proposal would increase eligibility to 250% FPL (\$2,851/mo. single - \$3835/mo couple) but keep the very low asset limit in place, barring low-income seniors who worked hard to save from qualifying for assistance.

#### **AFTER CONFERENCE COMMITTEE:**

Seniors are the only residents in MA who face an asset limit for health care assistance. 13 other states have eliminated it for MSP. The Legislature needs to raise the MSP asset limit to \$130,000 in the FY23 budget.

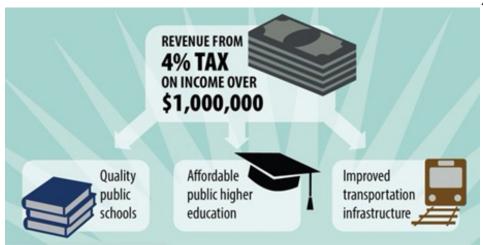
Email: eholmberg@MassSeniorAction.org or Call: 617-501-0648

#### voting from pg. 1

access to a complete and well-rounded education. We need to repair our state's backlog of hundreds of neglected and structurally dangerous bridges, roads, and trains. We need to make our public colleges affordable again so students can graduate without taking on enormous debt. And we need to increase access to vocational education as we rebuild our economy for working families.

If we don't address these problems now, they'll only hold back our economy and hurt working families. It's time for the very rich to pay their fair share so we can recover from the pandemic and rebuild a Massachusetts economy that's stronger than ever.

The Fair Share Amendment would only raise taxes on the top 1 percent of Massachusetts



households: those who earn more than a million dollars in a single year. And it would generate \$2 billion a year — every year — for investments in transportation and public education.

That's why the Fair Share Amendment is crucial to our economy and our recovery from COVID-19.

Massachusetts now allows everyone to vote by mail. You can request an absentee

ballot from your local clerk's office or by going visiting the Secretary of State's website: https://www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/eleifv/howreg.htm.

If you would like an absentee ballot application, a registration form, or your local voting information, contact MSAC: 617-284-1275 or info@masssenioraction. org

Last Day to register to vote: Aug. 13, 2022

Last day to request an absentee ballot: August 31, 2022

Primary Election: Sept. 6. General Election: Nov. 8, 2022

### New Office Phone Number: 617-284-1275

#### **Staff Contact Info**

For Assistance or More Information Please Call Us

Carolyn Villers	(617) 435-1926
Pam Edwards	
Tracey Carpenter	(413) 328-4659
Claudia Pérez (Habla Español)	(857) 236-5719
Eric Holmberg	(617) 501-0648
Shayla Fonfield	(617)284-1234
Jake Tabor	(617)637-7067

## Use SNAP at Food Trucks and some Restaurants. Massachusetts moves plan forward

On June 8, The Baker Administration opened a Notice of Opportunity (NOO) to strategically onboard restaurants and food trucks for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Restaurant Meals Program (RMP) pilot.

This is an opportunity for communities working to become more age-friendly to improve food access and work with local businesses.

Eligible businesses in this pilot phase of the program include restaurants and food trucks that are locally-privately-owned and provide counter-based service and payment. Applications can be submitted through August 31, 2022.

Under federal rules, the RMP allows individuals experiencing homelessness,



individuals with disabilities and households with older adults aged 60 and older to use their SNAP benefits at select, participating restaurants and food trucks that offer reduced-price meal options. Once launched, this program will expand food choice options and food access points for populations that may encounter barriers and challenges with purchasing and storing groceries, as well as cooking

and preparing meals for themselves.

Restaurants and food trucks can apply now through the end of the summer. The Administration anticipates the option for clients to use their benefits at the approved businesses will begin in fall 2022.

Learn more about the NOO and RMP program at Mass. gov/SNAPRestaurants.

## Join In The Action No Computer, No Internet, NO Problem!



Mass Senior Action has gone digital and we want you to come along with us. Problems like high healthcare costs, sky high rents, and unaffordable groceries need to be addressed. Now more than ever, senior voices are needed. Join Mass Senior Action on video and take charge! 617-284-1275 or info@masssenioraction.org

## What Do We Need to Stay in Our Homes?

Add your voice, the first 600 to complete the survey receives \$10.00.

Your voice is needed to inform MSAC's long term care work! To make our values of respect, dignity, and justice in aging a reality, we need to know more about the community's specific needs and concerns.

To do this, we are undertaking a large-scale survey project this summer. The survey will take about 15 to 20 minutes to complete and asks questions about long term care options, challenges, and solutions. You

can help build our collective power by taking part and adding your voice.

MSAC members will receive paper surveys in the mail over the coming weeks. Look out for this mailing and be sure to send your completed survey back. The first 600 people to complete the survey will receive a \$10 gift card. An online way to take the survey will also be available.

Contact Shayla Fonfield at sfonfield @

masssenioraction.org or 781-535-2429 with any questions or to request a survey in the mail or enter this link on your smartphone or computer: the link is tinyurl.com/surveymsac

or use your phone's camera to go directly to link with this code?

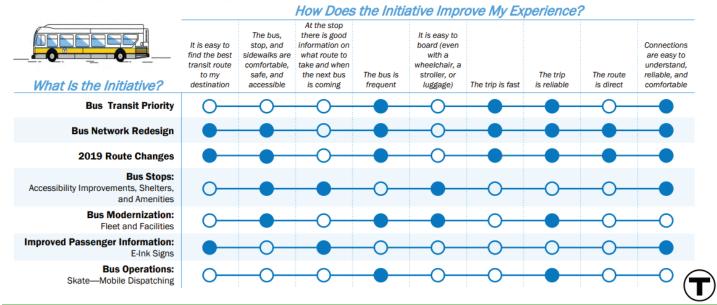


## MBTA Better Bus Project, Top Request: Access and Frequency

#### The Better Bus Project Is

- A major step in our efforts to improve bus service and the system as a whole
- A key part of our system-wide \$8 billion, 5-year capital investment program that began July 1, 2018
- The MBTA's partnership with more than 50 municipalities and MassDOT

Riders can see some of these efforts in action—like priority bus lanes and bus stop accessibility improvements. Some of our work—like new garages and better software for supervisors—is behind the scenes, and it helps keep 1,000 buses operating to carry about 400,000 riders each day. All of this together is the Better Bus Project.



Join the better transit campaign by contacting MSAC Organizer, Jake Taber: jtaber@MassSeniorAction.org or

# YES, We Can Re-Imagine Public Safety! Public safety should protect and serve all of US!

TODAY, we must move forward, to envision a compassionate future that promises greater safety. We envision the hope and love of the Springfield community which acknowledges each other's humanity. We recognize the intrinsic value of every member of the human family, we can achieve justice, healing and redemption.



## Join In The Fight for Justice! MSAC Gr. Springfield: tcarpenter@masssenioraciton.org



**Photo Above:** MSAC Chinese Speaking Committee meets in person for the first time since forming. Over 25 members, joined Malden Mayor Gary Christenson in thanking GBLS attorney, Alex Milvae for his effort to assist the city in expanding language access particularly in Malden Housing.



Photo Left: Boston City Councilor accepted MSAC's invite to speak with members at the Key Stone Apartments in Dorchester. Most members are new to MSAC and are using new skills to connect with decision makers. Thank you, MSAC activists Ruth Villard for setting up outreach meetings.



Photo Above: Malden activist Dee Campbell-Tompkins passed away suddenly in June. Dee will be missed by her wife Liz, and the entire community.

Dee's lifetime fight for justice will not be in vain. We will continue to fight for equality, universal healthcare, quality long term care, access to housing and food security.

## **Meet The Members:** Joan Noble, North Shore Chapter

My name is Joan B. Noble, and I am 85 years old. I was born and have lived in Lynn my entire life. At the age of 6, I was stricken with Infantile Paralysis, also known as Poliomyelitis (Polio), leaving me totally paralyzed. I share this information with you in order to give you some insight into the many, many battles I have fought over the last 79 years.

Prior to the passing of my husband, Guy in 2007 both of us were very active in our community. I was the director of religious education, my husband and I were catechists, I spearheaded and formed the faith community of St. Michael the Archangel when the archdiocese threatened the closing of our church we were able to prevail for 12 years. We volunteered with our children's sports, and our passion is and always has been our country's service men and women since 1961.

After losing Guy, I still remained active with the veterans serving as the National President of the Polish Legion of the American Veterans Ăuxiliary (PLAVA) and now as President of PLAVA Chapter 56.

Over the years we hosted pizza parties for service members at the VA hospital, organized fundraisers, and I volunteered at the Lynn VA clinic.

For 10 years, I have served as President of the "Friends of the Lynn COA" in this role I

was introduced to the Mass Senior Action Council. I now serve on the MSAC North Shore Chapter Board.

I appreciate the members of MSAC, and their commitment to making positive change. Times are much different, and it can be difficult to find people who are willing to give their time to non-profit organizations. MSAC does not have that problem. Members pitch in especially when the issue heats up.

I watched first hand how MSAC members forced elected leaders to pay attention to the Lynn senior center after being ignored for decades. Now we meet in a beautiful space where needed services and social activity can be offered to the area seniors.

Now we are standing together to stop the closing of the Lynn Veterans Clinic. We found out in late March, the Veteran Affairs is recommending closing veterans clinics across the country; so we met as a group and decided to organize against this devastating plan.

15 years ago, the VA proposed



the same closing plan for the Lynn VA. At that time, I had my husband and many other veterans to fight, and we were successful in stopping the plan to close. Now my husband and many other veterans are not here to fight; so I am so glad I have Mass Senior Action Council to stand with me. I know MSAC will fight with me and for the 2300 veterans and their families who depend on the care at the Lynn clinic.

It seems seniors face new cuts and budget challenges each day. I have witnessed the difference fighting those cuts together can make. I encourage all of you to join the Mass Senior Action Council. If you would like to join us in stopping the VA closing contact MSAC: info@ MassSeniorAction.org or 781-864-2596.





Senior Action Leader
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Quincy, MA 02171

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Network for Good.

Act**Blue** 





NUMBER FOR THE MAIN OFFICE: 617-284-1275