



Senior Action Leader

A VOICE FOR SENIORS AND THEIR FAMILIES

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Governor Proposes Eliminating Asset Test for MSP

Sending Seniors a Lifeline and unclogging the application process.

January 1st was supposed to mark a new chapter in Massachusetts with an historic expansion of the Medicare Savings Program (MSP).

For six months members reached into their communities to share the good news that they had secured expansion of Medicare Savings Program to 225% above the federal poverty level bringing benefits for the first time to tens of thousands of Massachusetts

seniors bearing the weight of high healthcare costs

Unfortunately, it did not take long for the astute MSAC members to realize something had gone wrong.

The State had not updated their website, or the MSP materials, and the application remained the same with the income guidelines of 2022.

It was two weeks into the new year when one MSAC member received a call from

MassHealth confirming their fears. The implementation of Medicare Savings Program expansion would be delayed for six months.

Members refused to accept this delay. Since July of 2022, MSAC spoke to hundreds of people counting on this benefit to ease budget woes.

The same day the member reported the delay to the MSAC MSP subcommittee, a

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What can *Senior Power* do?

Expand Eligibility for the Medicare Savings Program to lower senior healthcare cost.

ADD YOUR VOICE!
OUR WORK IS NOT DONE,
JOIN US AS WE BUILD FOR OUR NEXT VICTORY!
TURN TO PAGE 16 TO SEE NEW EXPANDED INCOME GUIDELINES.

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Chapter Meeting Information:

BOSTON CHAPTER

When: 2nd Thursday of the month at 1:00 pm

Location: Virtual or Charles St. AME Church
551 Warren Street, Dorchester

CAMBRIDGE/ SOMERVILLE CHAPTER

When: 3rd Friday of the month at 11:30 am

Location: Virtual or Cambridge Senior Center
806 Mass Avenue, Cambridge

NORTH SHORE CHAPTER

When: 3rd Wednesday of the month at 11:00 am

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: Virtual

CONTRIBUTORS:

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- Carolyn Villers - MSAC Executive Director
- Pam Edwards - MSAC Organizing Director
- Tracey Carpenter - MSAC Organizer
- Claudia Pérez - MSAC Organizer
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STATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- Kathy Paul, President
- Rosa Bentley, 1st Vice President
- Mary Napolitano, 2nd Vice President
- Martha London, Treasurer
- Bernice Ezell, Secretary
- Joanne Paul, Membership Coordinator

At Large or Outside Chapter Areas

When: 4th Thursday of the month at 1:00 pm

Virtual Meetings on Zoom

**Call MSAC for meeting info: 617-284-1275
or info@masssenioraction.org,**

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: _____ EMAIL: _____

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 **Kathy Paul**

Hello all you beautiful activists:

I am so happy to see Spring come. The change in weather and the longer days gives me energy to fight alongside you for the change we need.

I was honored to stand with the union Personal Care Attendants (PCA), members of SEIU1199, in March. These workers allow us to stay in our home. My neighbors call them angels because without them many would be forced to go into a nursing facility which is their biggest worry.

We stood in solidarity to demand the state treat them as the essential workers we know they are. So many of these workers love their jobs and their clients but cannot afford to stay in the profession. We need these workers more than ever and they deserve a living wage and respect for their profession.

It is not just the PCAs we feel should be treated with respect, all homecare workers deserve to be able to live off of one job with one paycheck.

I am baffled when I see in the news a man who can throw a ball is paid 100s of millions of dollars but the people who care for us and our children are forced to live off of scraps. I say enough. Quality jobs equals quality care!

For those who have SNAP benefits, I am sure you noticed April's amount did not look

like March's amount. After Congress voted 14 times to choose their new speaker, the next vote was to end the pandemic emergency amount. This vote means people will go back to the amount they received prior to Covid.

Just as food prices are higher than ever, they cut a food resource leaving us with barely enough to buy a week's worth of food. So back to high sodium canned goods and processed food.

The Governor did propose boosting the SNAP amount for 3 months but as I write this, our elected officials in the House have not found the time to vote on the supplemental budget. I hope they find time. I would like to enjoy fruits and vegetables for a few more months.

Now I ask you if you have not read anything else I have written so far, please pay attention to this next announcement. We have to get the word out about the MassHealth recertification requirement. Do not disregard the blue envelope in your mailbox. You must confirm your contact information with MassHealth. Read on page 6 for more information. Now I want you to sound the alarm with everyone you know, every group meeting you attend, every religious service you attend, tell everyone to recertify with MassHealth as soon as possible.



Now for some good news. I was thrilled to hear the Governor's budget included MSAC's proposal to eliminate the asset test for the Medicare Savings Program. This will help so many seniors including a few of our MSAC super star members who have been fighting for this for the past 4 years. Way to go MSAC!

Now we are not done yet. Our goal will be reached when healthcare is right for everyone no matter their income. We are going to be asking state lawmakers about the MassHealth income and asset guidelines for people 65 and over. We will ask why these guidelines have not been changed since 1981! Do you know how much bread and eggs were in 1981?! Other states have adjusted and Massachusetts needs to increase those amounts to reflect 2023, not 1981.

Join us in our fight for justice because we do not take it, We Take Charge!

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.

Shortage of Personal Care Attendants Sparks Rally. Quality Jobs = Quality Care, Invest in long term care workers.

Mass Senior Action Council members came together in Boston, on March 1, 2023 to support Personal Care Attendants (PCAs) and joined with consumers, disability and elder advocates, and elected officials to demand the fair pay and benefits needed to end the dangerous shortage of PCAs in Massachusetts.

The PCA Program is a MassHealth program that helps people with permanent or chronic disabilities keep their independence, stay in the community, and manage their own personal care by providing funds to hire personal care attendants (PCAs).

The event was hosted by the Services Employees International Union (SEIU 1199). Representing more than 70,000 healthcare workers throughout Massachusetts, including the PCAs. 1199SEIU caregivers have won higher job standards for healthcare workers, and are united in helping the state see that we need to invest in these essential workers.

"I became a PCA to care for one of my best friends and have remained in the profession even after her death," said Candejah Pink, a PCA from Springfield and member of 1199SEIU. "I love caring for others but it's not feasible to remain in the field without a second income. Every day, it is a struggle to afford necessities like gas and food, even when deemed essential. I deserve to thrive too."



PCAs begin negotiations for a new contract with the state this month, with the priority to increase wages and benefits necessary to pay workers a living wage. The high turnover and shortage of PCAs has left elders and people with disabilities waiting for months for help, often with no assistance at all in their homes, and limited ability to care for themselves.

MSAC President Kathy Paul addressed the crowd, "We stand with you because we know first hand, quality jobs equals quality care!!

I could tell you hundreds of stories of how personal care attendants improve the lives of Mass Senior Action members across the state.

I live in senior housing and I watch you come into my neighbors apartments to help them with daily tasks so they are able to stay in their home.

As I stand before you today, my long time neighbor Paulette is home recovering from foot surgery. Paulette did everything they told her so

she could get out of rehab as fast as she could. Paulette is thankful for her PCA because if she did not have one, she would not have been able to come back to her home.

Our goal is to stay in our homes and in our community as long as we can. You are key to us achieving our goal. It is time our elected officials treated you as the essential workers we know you are!!"

PCAs and their consumers headed to the State House from the Embrace Memorial to deliver a joint letter to Governor Healey's office highlighting demands to invest in the future of home care. Among the demands, PCAs are asking for an entry wage of \$25 per hour and benefits such as retirement. The PCA program is funded by MassHealth, employing over 58,000 workers across the state.

"The shortage of PCAs has reached a crisis," says Dianna Hu, Boston Center for

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Independent Living (BCIL) chairperson and longtime user of PCA services. "I rely on my PCAs to be able to eat, sleep, work, and sustain a meaningful life in the community. Independent and dignified living for tens of thousands of people with disabilities across the state comes under threat without access to PCA services."

The home care workforce is majority women and women of color with wages that are flat, absent of growth opportunity. Workers said that low wages are a major contributor to a staffing crisis badly damaged by high turnover.

"We heard from the people who are suffering most from the crisis in home care – elders and people with disabilities who can't find the help they need, and the workers who love their jobs, but need a living wage," said Tim Foley, executive vice president of 1199SEIU.

Tell your state legislator it is time to invest in the care the community needs and wants.

The event was supported by Tri-Valley Elder Services, Ethos and Mystic Valley Elder Services, Greater Lynn Senior Services, Mass Senior Action Council, New England Jewish Labor Committee, Matahari, Disability Policy Consortium, Our Bodies Ourselves, Ad Lib, Stavros, Boston Center for Independent Living, Independence Associates, Southeast Center for Independent Living, Northeast Independent Living Program, Cape Organization for Rights of the Disabled, and Center for Living and Working.



AFFORDABLE CONNECTIVITY PROGRAM

WHAT IS IT?

The Affordable Connectivity Program is an FCC program that helps connect families and households struggling to afford internet service.

The benefit provides:

- Up to \$30/month discount for internet service;
- Up to \$75/month discount for households on qualifying Tribal lands; and
- A one-time discount of up to \$100 for a laptop, desktop computer, or tablet purchased through a participating provider.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

A household is eligible for the Affordable Connectivity Program if the household income is at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines, or if a member of the household meets at least one of the criteria below:

- Participates in any of the following assistance programs: SNAP, Medicaid, Federal Public Housing Assistance, Veterans Pension or Survivor Benefits, SSI, WIC, or Lifeline;
- Participates in any of the following Tribal specific programs: Bureau of Indian Affairs General Assistance, Tribal TANF, Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations, or Tribal Head Start (income based);
- Participates in the Free and Reduced-Price School Lunch Program or the School Breakfast Program, including through the USDA Community Eligibility Provision;
- Received a Federal Pell Grant during the current award year; or
- Meets the eligibility criteria for a participating broadband provider's existing low-income internet program.

TWO STEPS TO ENROLL

1

Go to AffordableConnectivity.gov to submit an application or print a mail-in application

2

Contact your preferred participating provider to select an eligible plan and have the discount applied to your bill.

Some providers may have an alternative application that they will ask you to complete.

Eligible households must **both** apply for the program **and** contact a participating provider to select a service plan.

LEARN MORE

- 📞 Call 877-384-2575, or
- 🌐 Visit fcc.gov/acp



MSA Staff Contact Info

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- Shayla Fonfield.....(617)284-1234

TOGETHERWERISE



Attention MassHealth Recipients

Look for the Blue Envelope in your mailbox. Time to recertify.

MassHealth members will soon need to renew their health coverage.

**Act now.
Stay covered.**



**Call MassHealth
Recertification
1-800-841-2900**



What you need to do now

- **Make sure MassHealth has your most up to date address, phone number, and email so you do not miss important information and notices from MassHealth.**

If we are not able to contact you, your coverage may change or you may lose your coverage during your renewal.

- **Report any household changes. These include a new job, address, changes to your income, disability status, or pregnancy.**

Update your information and report changes using your MA Login Account at www.mass.gov/malix.org/individual.

1. Update your contact information. Make sure MassHealth has your most up to date address, phone number, and email so you do not miss important information and notices from MassHealth.

2. Report any household

changes. These include a new job, address, changes to your income, disability status, or pregnancy. MassHealth wants to make sure we have the latest information for you and all members of your household, so you get the best benefit you qualify for.

3. Read all mail from MassHealth. MassHealth will mail you information about your health benefit that may require you to take action to keep your current coverage. Look out for a blue envelope in the mail and make note of the important deadlines.

Extra COVID SNAP benefits will end for all households beginning in **March 2023***



During COVID, Massachusetts households received an extra SNAP payment every month. These extra payments are separate from your regular SNAP benefit.



Due to a decision by Congress, the last COVID SNAP payment will be on March 2, 2023

If you are age 60+ or disabled, telling DTA about healthcare costs may help you get more SNAP

Your regular SNAP benefit amount is based on your income and living expenses. Telling DTA about at least \$35/month in unreimbursed healthcare costs may lead to a boost in your SNAP benefits.



If you have more than \$190/month in health care costs DTA will need proof of all expenses.

How to Tell DTA About Healthcare Costs:



Write down on a piece of paper anytime or on application/recertification - send in through DTAConnect.com or fax/mail/in-person



Use DTA's form:
Mass.gov/doc/medical-expense-form



Over the phone by calling the Senior Assistance Line at (855) 712-8027

Examples of Healthcare Costs Include:

- Prescriptions, over-the-counter healthcare items, vitamins, wound care, etc.
- Insurance premiums & co-payments
- Eyeglasses, contacts, hearing aids, medical equipment
- Acupuncture or alternative medicine
- Transportation costs to appointments
- One-time medical bills

* **Possible Good News:** In January 2023, Governor Maura Healey sent a budget request to the Massachusetts Legislature to continue state-funded partial extra SNAP for three months.

For more information, visit Mass.gov/ExtraCOVIDSNAP

For questions contact Katie Kelly, MLRI AmeriCorps Advocate at kkelly@mlri.org

Support Building a Bridge Housing Voucher: Keep Low Income Older Adult Renters in their Homes

There is a well-documented relationship between safe, secure, and affordable housing and health. Older adults facing housing insecurity are more likely to experience poor health than those in stable housing. Many older low-income renters in Massachusetts struggle with housing instability. Overall, 61.7% of the state's residents older than 65 who live alone do not have enough income to cover basic expenses such as housing, food, and health care. It is even more dire for older adults of color: 91% of Latinx, 78% of Asian American, and 72% of African Americans living alone cannot cover basic expenses.

Many of these households apply for senior housing when they fall behind on their rent. Older adult homelessness has been on the rise as rents continue to increase. If this trend continues, we can expect older adult homelessness to triple by 2030. A key to reversing this trend is to have a targeted, upstream homelessness prevention program for older adults who are low-income renters to ensure they remain stably housed while waiting for affordable housing.

Over the past year the Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless along with groups like Mass Senior Action Council have been collaborating on crafting a legislative solution to ensure that older low income adult

renters remain stably housed. Working in collaboration with groups from across the Commonwealth to build a solution:

- *Provide \$10 million in FY24 to create bridge subsidies for up to 1,000 older adults facing housing instability to allow them to remain in place while they await approval for state-funded public housing or a subsidy through the Mass. Rental Voucher Program. Low-income older adults participating in the bridge subsidy program would pay 30% of their income towards rent, with the bridge subsidy making up the difference in the total rent, up to 110% of the fair market rent. The bridge subsidy program would be administered by the Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA) in collaboration with the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD).



2007: MSAC at the state house asking for housing, "Where will all the seniors go?" and the need is greater now.

- *Embed a housing stability screening tool into the Common Housing Application for Massachusetts Programs (CHAMP) that would be taken at the time an older adult applies for state-funded senior housing through DHCD.

- *Provide funding through EOE to contract with a nonprofit agency (or agencies) that would take on the task of reviewing the housing stability screenings, as well as offer older adults legal aid assistance and access to Housing Advocates to ensure that at-risk older adults receive ongoing housing stabilization assistance until they move into state-funded senior housing or other safe, permanent housing.

To learn more about how to ensure older lower-income adult renters remain stably housed while awaiting senior affordable housing contact: Jody Kelly @ Jody@mahomeless.org. Tell your legislators this is needed now.



MSAC organizes for better Transit.

Low income fare and access top priority.

Mass Senior Action members formed a Transit subcommittee to address affordability and access challenges. You can read a few of the committee's priorities here. If you want to make public transit accessible, contact MSAC to join the transit justice warriors.

1. One of our campaign priorities, winning a low income fare for the MBTA, is a step closer to becoming reality.

Governor Maura Healey just came out with her budget proposal; this isn't the finalized budget, it's her suggestion for what the 2024 budget for the state should be. One of the first things we noticed: she proposes 5 million dollars for a "pilot" of the low-income fare – a test run of the program to prove its effectiveness.

The Low Income Fare is a proposal we're supporting that would create a reduced fare for all riders under a certain income level, not just youth or seniors. But it would benefit many seniors too: Users of the RIDE, senior or otherwise, would also see their RIDE fares reduced.

We're planning on hitting the state house soon to make sure this proposal becomes a reality. But you can help push for the low income fare right now.

Call your state representative, say you're a constituent and a member of Mass Senior Action, and urge them to

support the Governor's low income fare proposal in the budget.

Then, urge them to pass bills that would create a full version of the Low Income Fare program: House bill 3417, and Senate Bill 2231.

2. We're distributing a short survey to seniors in the community to learn about their transit needs – what public transit they use, and what problems they have with it (or, if they're not public transit users, why they stay away!)

We need your help to make sure we get it out to as many folks as possible.

What's our endgame here? It's all about learning from the community – and growing our numbers in the process.

This year, with the fair share campaign over, the Transit committee is working to figure out our next steps. What campaign can we run – and win – that will make a real difference for seniors by improving our ability to get around?

As we visit our senior centers, or present at senior buildings, or table at community events, asking seniors to fill out these surveys will give us clear information about what different struggles folks in different towns, neighborhoods or buildings face.

With information from the surveys, we can not only figure out what we should



MSAC member leaders testified at the State Revenue Committee hearing, "Invest in Transit, the voters will be for everyone to pay their fair share."

advocate for at the state level; we can also learn more about local problems our chapters should work to address. We can bring these survey responses to our elected officials to show them what their constituents are dealing with on the ground.

And of course, we can invite them to come be a part of the solution by joining mass senior action's local chapter – and the statewide transit committee!

The best way to help this effort is to take the survey, then ask those you know to take it, too. The more people we hear from, the better information we'll have – and the more people we can follow up with.

To get paper copies mailed to you, contact your local organizer, or Jake Taber at 617-637-7067/jtaber@masssenioraction.org.

Healey should settle, not litigate, disability lawsuit: Avoid institutionalization in nursing homes.

EVERY DAY, thousands of Massachusetts residents with disabilities are admitted to segregated nursing facilities, be it to recover from medical procedures, to receive respite and care because they're homeless, or because of a lack of supportive services that are needed to remain at home and in their communities.

While many eventually leave, thousands do not, even though they want to. As a class action lawsuit filed in October alleges, the determining factor between who stays and who goes often is a matter of race and class.

It will be up to an incoming Healey administration—as well as Attorney General Andrea Campbell—to decide whether to fight this case. But as much as everyone loves the imaginary Hollywood spectacle of a big courtroom battle over legal rights, the best move is to negotiate and settle this lawsuit.

The plaintiffs in this case are six of the roughly 20,000 people currently living in nursing facilities in Massachusetts on the Commonwealth's Medicaid program, called MassHealth. They include Lorraine Simpson, a homeless woman who was refused housing in Worcester County, and John Simmons, a man with mental illness who has languished in an Everett nursing home for three years.

What they share is something we have both seen; one of us

as someone who was once briefly institutionalized in a psychiatric facility and got out, and the other as someone who fights to get people out of institutions. They are Black, poor, and without friends and family nearby who can help them.

As a result, perhaps thankfully, they are entitled to federally-funded care through MassHealth. This comes with an expectation that the rights of individuals protected under the Medicaid Act and the landmark Americans with Disabilities Act will be respected. Within that context, the federal government's position is clear, and guided by the Supreme Court's 1999 Olmstead case, which said that individuals have a right to live in "the most integrated setting." Significantly, the Commonwealth's failure to comply with these laws also is the subject of an ongoing investigation by the US Department of Justice.

Taken together, the intent of the legal landscape is clear. It was created as part of the movement against the historical discrimination against people with disabilities, including their unnecessary institutionalization in nursing facilities. This is why the Center for Public Representation and a coalition of legal partners initiated this case with the straightforward goal of allowing people with disabilities to live in the



Photo: 2009: MSAC members rallied for long term care (LTC) funding chanting, "Home Care not Nursing Homes!" MSAC joined the lawsuit to demand care with dignity.

community rather than be forced into an institution just to get basic health care.

Whatever the impasse that led the state to contest the allegations in this suit, Gov. Maura Healey and Attorney General Campbell have the ability, and the obligation, to negotiate a settlement instead of continuing down the path of litigation. The reasons abound. During the campaign for governor, Maura Healey strongly supported community-based services for persons with disabilities that enable people to live in their homes instead of in facilities. And through her own prosecution of nursing facilities, she has expressed

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concern about the potential for abuse within this system. Similarly, Campbell has been a fierce and outspoken critic of the ways in which incarceration is used against BIPOC communities—and certainly many nursing home residents have labeled themselves inmates.

But more broadly, the state has already shown that it is possible to serve people with disabilities in integrated settings instead of unnecessarily institutionalizing them in nursing facilities. The Rolland and Hutchinson class action suits against the Commonwealth that were settled years ago successfully led to the release of 3,000 people with intellectual disabilities and brain injuries from nursing facilities and the provision of needed care in new community homes. In those cases, the state was able to design a program that met their needs, that saved money, and that complied with the law.

Perhaps most of all, the timing is right. Sadly, COVID is still with us, and people in facilities are always at inordinate risk of infection and death, as has so tragically occurred since 2020. Providing services and supports in integrated settings in the community is sound public health policy. And the chance to start fresh also should not be ignored. An incoming administration has one opportunity to make a first introduction to communities that it values. This is an opportunity for Healey and Campbell to do just that.

Improving Access to LTC Options

- States are looking at best methods to avoid unwanted institutionalization
 - Managed Care (Arizona, Texas, New York)
 - Various Nursing Home Transition programs
- Nursing Home Transition programs
 - Large statewide programs (WA, NJ, Oregon)
 - State employees (NJ, WA)
 - Contracted organizations (CO)
 - Small programs for most challenging (SC, CT)
 - Locally based organizations (Centers for Independent Living, Area Agencies on Aging)

Negotiating a pathway out for many of the 20,000 Bay Staters would send a powerful signal to one of the most marginalized populations—people with disabilities in nursing facilities, many of whom are from communities of color. It would also build trust with community partners who excel at coming up with creative solutions to these very challenges. And it could quickly end the ongoing US Department of Justice investigation of federal law violations.

This approach is not just advisable, it is necessary, because protracted litigation is expensive to the taxpayers, would force the six plaintiffs – and thousands of others like them – to remain in nursing facilities for years, and even could risk the critical gains of the past 30 years, given the current Supreme Court.

Moments of opportunity such as this one do not last long. The details of a negotiated settlement require time to develop. But the incoming administration should signal early on that they want to

negotiate, not litigate, this case. They can then do the work to resolve this lawsuit in ways that are constructive for the very people they have sought higher office to defend.

Alex Green teaches at the Harvard Kennedy School. Bill Henning is executive director of the Boston Center for Independent Living. article from Commonwealth Magazine.



**Do you know
someone who is in
a nursing home
but would like to
live in the
community?**

**Contact MSAC:
617-284-1275 or
info@MassSenior
Action.org**

MSAC Long Term Care Committee

Aging with dignity where we choose

Working with the University of Massachusetts Boston, MSAC was able to survey over 1,000 seniors across the Commonwealth to understand what are their hopes, fears and dreams around long-term care (LTC). We learned things that seem intuitive however, many of these things we learned about what seniors want are NOT currently centered in the long-term care systems we have in place today.

We learned people want transparency around long-term care, we learned people want to age with dignity, and we learned people want to stay inside of their homes.

We held a forum where we were able to share the data we received with members, community partners and stakeholders in the long-term care community and the turnout was amazing! In the forum we saw that the data was reinforced through the testimony of our members and community partners' lived experience.

MSAC LTC committee member Kamilah Sharif shared her personal experience, "I have witnessed the gaps in care first hand as a professional caregiver and with my own family. As a nation we can do better for those who want to stay in their home but need support to do so."

Long-term care for senior citizens is a critical issue that requires an emphasis on equity and social justice. Access to quality care should not be based on an individual's income, race, or other factors that may impact their ability to receive the care they need.

The committee looked at policy other states have adopted and found Massachusetts is behind. "There are several care policies Massachusetts could copy from around the country that would not cost anymore than the state currently spends and would have better outcomes for those who need long term care," LTC

committee member Elaine Correia from New Bedford commented.

To address this issue, a committee has been started to build a campaign around the importance of equitable and socially just long-term care and to envision what that would look like and how we could get there.

This campaign will focus on the importance of home and community-based supports, financing around long term care, and issues such as staffing shortages and ensuring that all caregivers are trained and equipped to meet the unique needs of each senior in their care.

MSAC Boston Chapter member Paulette Durrett reported to the committee, "When we met with the care providers we found these workers were dedicated to their clients and loved their jobs but the low wages and lack of a career ladder forced them to seek other professions. There is a great need for this work and one of our committee goals will be to address the lack of dignity by our society for these professions."

We must work together to ensure that all seniors receive the care and support they need to age with dignity and respect. Join us in advocating for equitable and socially just long-term care for all seniors. Contact LTC organizer Jamaleek Bush: jbush@MassSeniorAction.org or 617-501-0648.

We Do Not Take It, We Take Charge!



¡ No lo tomamos, Nos hacemos cargo !

MSP cont'd from pg.1

group of members organized and planned a meeting with the new Director of MassHealth to express their concerns and convey the deep impact this failure would have. MSAC members did not stop with just reporting this implementation failure, they felt the system had caused deep harm to seniors across Massachusetts and in doing so must make reparations to repair that harm.

A leader on the subcommittee, Rosa Bentley explained to the Director, "You do not understand what it is like to see a small light at the end of the tunnel and then find out someone turned the light off just as you were so close to getting to it. Seniors are struggling with housing cost, high food prices, and this expansion was going to be their lifeline."

The director agreed to address the hardship caused by the approval postponement by "retro" approving applicants from the day the application was mailed to MassHealth.

Although, this was a welcome compromise, MSAC members urged MassHealth to once again revisit elimination of the asset limit for Medicare Savings Program. The MSP committee pointed out that the costs for the proposal had already been calculated and accounted for. The members explained eliminating the asset limit would reduce a significant barrier to eligible seniors from getting help and help the department streamline reviewing the applications.

Furthermore, they urged the new director to look at

the asset limit for seniors who are income eligible for MassHealth. The asset guidelines for that program have not been updated since 1981 and they still count life insurance. It is time to finally update the punitively low asset limit of \$2,000 for single person and \$3,000 for a couple to \$10,000 and \$20,000, respectively.

After the meetings with MassHealth, members knew they had been heard when Governor Healey's budget included MSAC's proposal to eliminate the asset limit for MSP, members were thrilled.

Upon hearing the news of Healey's proposal, MSP subcommittee leader Kamilah Sharif raised her hands in the air and said, "MSAC finally did it. I have always been income eligible, but I must have a savings account to pay for house repairs. Anyone who owns a home knows there will be repairs. My small rainy-day fund blocked me from the MSP benefits. The Governor's budget would allow me to qualify and truly bring relief."

MSAC will continue to advocate throughout the budget process. We will speak to our legislators to ask them to not only adopt eliminating the asset limit for MSP, but we will also fight to finally change the 1981 asset limits for MassHealth too.

Until the state adopts a Medicare For All health system, we will continue to chip away at the current system to bring cost relief to residents.

Contact MSAC for information: 617-284-1275 or info@MassSeniorAction.org



**Governor Healey
proposed to eliminate
the asset limit for
MSP.**

**Call your legislators
TODAY and urge them
to include Governor
Healey's MSP
proposal in the FY25
Budget.**

**State House:
617-722-2000**



**Eliminate the
asset limit for
MSP.
Increase the asset
limit for
MassHealth.**

MSAC Members In Action



Top Left: New MSAC Organizer Jamaleek Bush with MSAC members: Johnnie Clark, Sandra Wedgeworth, State Senator Lydia Edwards, Linda Freeman, and Roberto Lobos at the Embrace Statue for the PCA Rally. *pg. 4 for info*

Top Right: MSAC members from four chapter areas at the PCA rally. Holding the banner Boston Chapter Maria Roldan and Lynn member Debbie Craig.

Middle Top: MSAC members represented their Boston Chapter at Congresswoman Pressley's district meeting. Mack Knight Jr., Linda Freeman, Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley, Paulette Durrett, Sandra Wedgeworth.

Middle Bottom: Metro North Chapter host Malden Councilor Karen Colon-Hayes.

Bottom Left: MSAC member and Lynn City Councilor Coco Alinsug proudly wore his shirt at a meeting in *Johannesburg, South Africa*.

Bottom Right: Lynn Councilor Fred Hogan recognized two MSAC members who fight for justice in their community, Kiki Chaiton and Mary Joyner.



Meet The Members: Tony Bass, Greater Springfield Chapter

Tony joined Mass Senior Acton Action as a lifetime member over 6 years ago. He hit the ground running and soon became an active member lending his voice to the Bridge the Gap healthcare campaign by sharing his mother's healthcare story. This was a very personal campaign for Tony as he witnessed his mother's urgent need for accessible and affordable healthcare.

He has been a strong advocate to building voice and senior power in the community. He has held the role of Greater Springfield Chapter vice president for 5 years! As member of the Board, I am proud that we look after each other. I am especially proud of how members of this Chapter came forward to speak up for the needs of our community. I am proud that we take care of each other. And we are united in holding the city of

Springfield accountable to our needs.

Tony was recently nominated and elected chapter president. He imparts that one of the key takeaways from serving as VP has been the Chapter's development of cooperative working allies that share our vision a city that gives Access for All and Reimaging Public Safety that's transparent and has accountability to its citizens. This is a great blueprint; I look forward to continuing building community allies.

He is a veteran who served in the U.S. Marine Corps. Tony is the former Commander of the Springfield Chapter of the National Association for Black Veterans Inc.'s Command Council. NAB/VETS is dedicated to serving veterans who needed the most help with accessing government assistance with their medical and daily



Current Chapter President Tony Bass standing with previous Gr. Springfield Presidents Mattie Lacewell on the left and Vivian Moulden on the right.

needs. Its goal is to create a positive lifestyle for veterans.

Tony often says that the former Chapter President Ms. Mattie has left some big shoes to fill. And that as a team she always encouraged each of us to take steps into those shoes.

**Interested in building senior power
but not near a chapter area?**

MSAC Virtual Meeting
Each month: 4th Wed., 1:00 pm

Join us on Zoom by contacting MSAC:

Info@MassSeniorAction.org or 617-284-1275





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**WANT HELP PAYING FOR YOUR
MEDICARE COVERAGE?**

This is not insurance. This is a program MSAC members won!

**For an
application,
information,
or to take
action
contact
MSAC!**

The Massachusetts Medicare Savings Programs (MSP) may help!
These federally funded programs will pay for you:

- Monthly Medicare Part B premium (\$164.90/mo)
- Prescription drug costs (premium & co-pays)
- **And for some**, the Medicare Part A and Part B out-of-pocket costs (deductibles & co-insurance)



NEW EXPANDED ELIGIBILITY

You may qualify if your income and assets are at or below the amounts listed here:

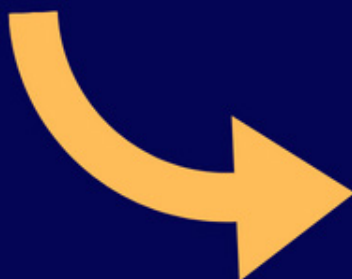
Starting March 1, 2023		
Household	Monthly Income	Assets*
Single Person	\$ 2,754	\$ 18,180
Married Couple	\$ 3,718	\$ 27,260

*Your home, car, and life insurance are **NOT** counted as Assets.

**We are not done! Join us as we continue to fight for
Equity, Justice, and Dignity in Aging.**

On March 1, 2023 Governor Healey proposed to eliminate the asset limit for MSP. Call your legislators TODAY and urge them to include Governor Healey's proposal in the FY25 Budget.

State House switchboard: 617-722-2000 or
<https://malegislature.gov/Search/FindMyLegislator>



**WE DONT TAKE IT,
WE TAKE CHARGE !**



To Learn More, Contact Mass Senior Action Council
info@MassSeniorAction.org - 617-284-1275
www.MassSeniorAction.org