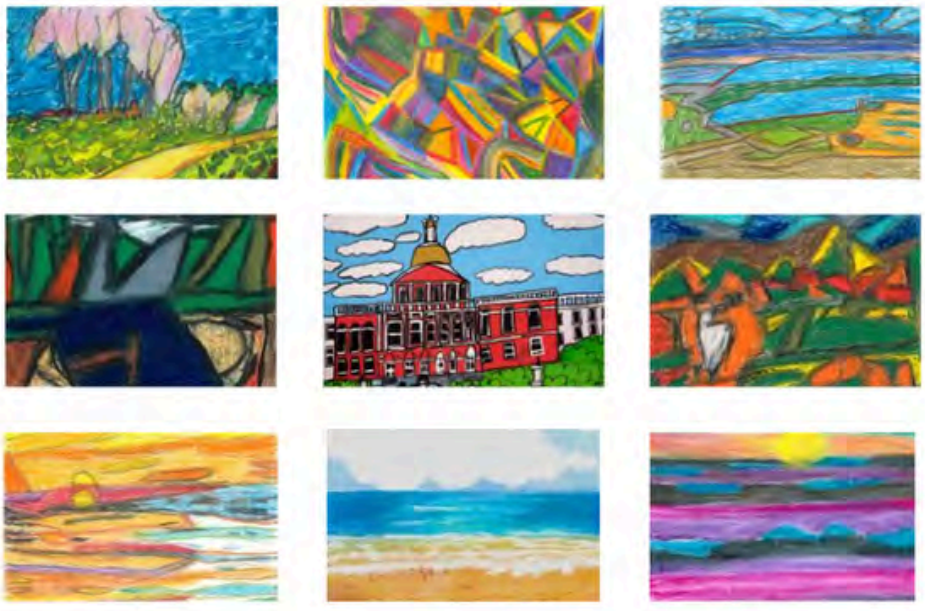
FY26 ANNUAL REPORT

Reporting Period: JULY 2025–JUNE 2026
(As of October 31, 2026)

MASSACHUSETTS

COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES



Credit: Vinfen's Gateway Arts

Massachusetts Permanent Commission on the Status of Persons with Disabilities

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Barbara Brown. Untitled. 2020. Mixed media on paper. 4.25 x 5.5 in.
Vinfen's Gateway Arts

1. Executive Summary

During Fiscal Year 2026 (July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026), the Massachusetts Permanent Commission on the Status of Persons with Disabilities brought people with disabilities, families, advocates, state agencies, researchers, and policymakers into conversations about the challenges facing the disability community. From **employment and workforce shortages to health care, housing, and community living**, the year's work showed how closely these issues are connected and how difficult it can be for people to get the services and opportunities they need.

At the full Commission level, discussions addressed **federal policy changes and their potential effects on people with disabilities** in Massachusetts. Topics included **Medicaid and SNAP, access to historical state institution records, and federal litigation affecting state programs and services.** The Commission also heard from state officials about **expanding apprenticeship opportunities and increasing participation by disability-owned businesses in state contracting.** These discussions gave Commissioners an opportunity to hear directly from the agencies responsible for these programs, ask questions, and consider how policy decisions could affect people with disabilities across the Commonwealth.

Convene. Collaborate. Communicate. These three functions shaped the Commission's work throughout FY26. Public meetings provided a forum for sharing research, raising concerns about state and federal policies, and learning from the experiences of people directly affected. The Commission also established its Advisory Council, bringing additional lived experience and expertise from **education, employment, housing, transportation, health care, and disability advocacy into its work.**



The three subcommittees brought important findings to the Commission's attention.

In Disability Employment, work with the State Exchange on Employment & Disability (SEED) resulted in a **policy crosswalk comparing Massachusetts' employment policies and practices with approaches used in other states.**

In Workforce Supports, a survey of 102 developmental disability provider organizations found that **overall vacancy rates had fallen from 19% to 15%**, although **licensed practical nurse vacancies remained at 28%.**

In Long-Term Services and Supports & Health Equity, presentations addressed **gaps in community-based services, accessible housing, Medicaid, care coordination, and disability discrimination in health care**, including research estimating that **17.6 million U.S. adults** need long-term services and supports. In Massachusetts, approximately **83,000 MassHealth members** received community-based LTSS and **21,000** received institutional LTSS in an average month during state fiscal year 2024.[1]

The Commission also launched ***Meeting the Moment*, a statewide series of community conversations and resource fairs.** The first two events, held in **MetroWest** and **North of Boston**, brought together **more than 200 attendees and over 60 participating organizations**. Community members had the opportunity to speak directly with Commissioners about the issues affecting their lives, while the resource fairs connected attendees with state agencies, disability organizations, local commissions, and service providers. The series will continue in the next fiscal year, with events planned for Northampton and the South Shore.

Across the Commission's meetings and community conversations, several concerns came up repeatedly: **services that exist but remain difficult to access, shortages in the workforce people depend on, gaps between education and adult services, and barriers to employment and community living.** These issues will remain part of the Commission's work in FY27, along with the continued expansion of *Meeting the Moment* into other regions of Massachusetts and opportunities to bring what the Commission is hearing from communities into discussions with state agencies and policymakers.

[1]Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS), Massachusetts Long-Term Services and Supports Feasibility Study (2025), Appendix A, "Current Landscape of LTSS Financing in Massachusetts" (SFY2024 MassHealth fee-for-service utilization data).

2. About the Commission

The Massachusetts Permanent Commission on the Status of Persons with Disabilities, “The Commission”, is an independent state agency established under **Chapter 253 of the Acts of 2020, codified at Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 3, Section 74.** The Commission is charged with advancing the interests of people with disabilities across the Commonwealth by examining barriers to access, identifying disparities in services and opportunities, and advising state policymakers on issues affecting the disability community.

The Commission’s mandate spans across **employment, transportation, public benefits, education-to-employment transitions, access to state services, and disability inclusion in the public and private sectors.** It also includes reviewing state agency programs and practices, assessing the potential impact of legislation, and promoting collaboration among local disability commissions, advocacy organizations, and service providers.

Central to this work is **the recognition that people with disabilities must have opportunities to participate in discussions and decisions that affect their lives.** The Commission brings together individuals with disabilities, state officials, community organizations, researchers, employers, and other stakeholders to examine issues from different perspectives and better understand how policies and programs affect people across Massachusetts.

2.1 Structure and Membership

The Commission consists of **23 members** appointed by the Governor, legislative leadership, constitutional officers, and designated disability-related organizations. Members bring lived experience, professional expertise, and perspectives from across the disability community.

The Commission is supported by an Executive Director and conducts its work through public meetings, currently three subcommittees, and statewide engagement initiatives.

The three subcommittees focus on distinct but interconnected areas:

Disability Employment: Examines barriers to employment and opportunities to strengthen inclusive hiring, retention, career advancement, and workforce participation for people with disabilities.

Workforce Supports: Focuses on the workforce that provides essential services and supports to people with disabilities, including challenges related to recruitment, retention, workforce stability, and service availability.

Long-Term Services and Supports (LTSS) and Health Equity: Examines access to long-term services and supports, health disparities, and the policies and practices that affect the ability of people with disabilities to receive appropriate care and live in their communities.

2.2 Convene. Collaborate. Communicate

The Commission approaches its work through three connected functions:

Convene. Bring people with disabilities, family, friends, allies, policymakers, state agencies, advocates, service providers, and other stakeholders together to share information, discuss emerging concerns, and hear directly from the communities affected.

Collaborate. Work across agencies, organizations, and sectors to better understand shared challenges, connect expertise and resources, and identify opportunities for coordinated efforts.

Communicate. Share information, research, and community perspectives with policymakers, partners, and the public through accessible meetings, reports, public events, and ongoing outreach.

These functions guide the Commission's work throughout the year, from its public meetings and subcommittee discussions to regional community engagement and partnerships across the Commonwealth.







2.3 Advisory Council

In FY26, the Commission established an Advisory Council to bring additional perspectives and expertise into its work. The Council includes leaders, self-advocates, and subject-matter experts representing a broad range of sectors, including **healthcare, education, transportation, housing, employment and business, government, community advocacy, and disability rights**. Members serve in a non-voting advisory role, sharing their knowledge, lived experience, and connections across sectors to help inform and strengthen the Commission's work.

The Council convened twice during FY26, beginning with its inaugural orientation in January and reconvening in May to continue building connections and identifying areas where members could contribute their expertise.









Carmella Salvucci. Untitled. 2020. pencil and colored pencil on paper. 4.25 x 5.5 in.
Vinfen's Gateway Arts

3. Commission Activities

3.1 Issues before the Commission

September 2025 | Medicaid and SNAP
Jennifer Bertrand, Deputy Director
Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council

Federal Medicaid and SNAP changes raised concerns about the effect on people with disabilities and the services they rely on. Commissioners discussed the potential impact on Home and Community-Based Services, the Personal Care Attendant workforce, residential providers, and family caregivers, as well as the risk of greater reliance on institutional care if community-based supports are reduced.

141,000–203,000 MassHealth members estimated to be at risk of losing coverage, many because of new administrative requirements.

December 2025 | Access to State Institution Records
Erin Brown, Deputy General Counsel & Christopher Klaskin, Associate Commissioner of Complex Cases, Department of Developmental Services

DDS presented on Chapter 73 of the Acts of 2025, **including best-interest determinations before records are disclosed, proof-of-kinship requirements, privacy protections, the Records Conservation Board's role in reviewing record destruction, and coordination with the Department of Mental Health.**

Commissioners also discussed historical transparency and what these records can teach us about institutionalization, community integration, and disability stigma.

Issues before the Commission (Cont'd)

March 2026 | Federal Actions and Litigation
Katherine Dirks, Chief State Trial Counsel, Massachusetts Attorney General's Office

The Chief State Trial Counsel briefed the Commission on federal actions and litigation affecting Massachusetts, including **education, immigration, research funding, mental health services, and federal funding for state programs**. Commissioners asked about potential impacts on Medicaid and disability-related initiatives and the uncertainty facing employers and organizations as federal policies changed. The Attorney General's Office also shared its guidance for businesses on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility employment initiatives, giving Commissioners a resource to share with employers and organizations.

March 2026 | Apprenticeships and Workforce Development
Undersecretary of Labor Josh Cutler and Ammarah Rehman, Apprenticeship Liaison, Division of Apprentice Standards

The discussion focused on expanding apprenticeships beyond traditional trades and creating more opportunities for people with disabilities. Examples included **human services, healthcare, IT, early education, Bridgewater State University's EXCEL Program, MA Inclusive Postsecondary Education, and partnerships with community colleges.**

Commissioners discussed accessible industry credentials, employer-designed training, partnerships with education providers, and ways successful apprenticeship models could be expanded across Massachusetts.

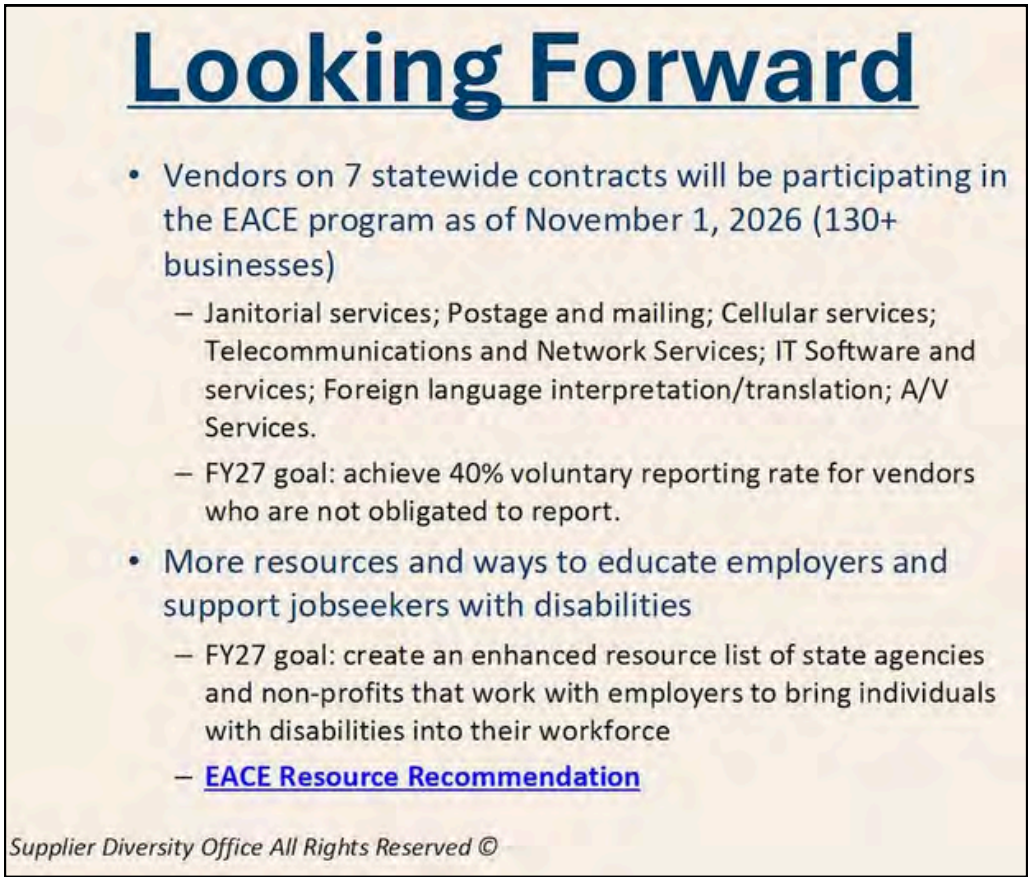
Access all meeting materials and minutes by scanning the QR code.

Issues before the Commission (Cont'd)

June 2026 | Disability-Inclusive Contracting and Employment
Emily Maguire, EACE Program Coordinator, Massachusetts Supplier Diversity Office

The Commission heard about the first year of the **Empowering Abilities in Contracting and Employment (EACE) program**, which works to increase participation by disability-owned and service-disabled veteran-owned businesses in state contracting while also supporting vendors in hiring and retaining people with disabilities.

Commissioners asked about participation by disability-owned businesses and the collection of workforce data, including how to encourage businesses to report disability employment numbers even when those numbers are low.



Source: Massachusetts Supplier Diversity Office, Empowering Abilities in Contracting and Employment (EACE), presentation to the Massachusetts Permanent Commission on the Status of Persons with Disabilities, June 3, 2026.

4. Statewide Engagement: Meeting the Moment

2	200+	60+
REGIONS	ATTENDEES	ORGANIZATIONS

Bringing the Commission into Communities Across Massachusetts

In FY26, the Commission launched *Meeting the Moment*, a statewide series of community conversations and resource fairs designed to bring its work directly to **people with disabilities, families, caregivers, local disability commissions, advocates, community organizations, and state agencies.**

The series began in **MetroWest in November 2025**, with the Commission later partnering with **MassAbility** to bring the second event to **North of Boston in March 2026.** Through community conversations and resource fairs, participants shared their experiences directly with Commissioners while connecting with agencies and organizations offering services and supports.

Creating space to listen and connect

Community members could raise the issues affecting their lives, speak directly with Commissioners, and connect with resources in their region.







What We Heard Across Communities

During both community conversations, participants raised issues **affecting daily life, including access to services, housing, employment, education, transportation, communication, and community inclusion.**

MetroWest

November 2025



North of Boston

March 2026


disabilities
support
services
que
los
one
care
just
people
can
programs
community
mental
language
access
every
person
many
individuals
employment
vocational
eligibility
counselors
entrepreneurship
meaningful
benefits
strengthen
accessible
disability
without
accessibility
communication
massability
demonstration
homebound
systems
massachusetts
parents
padres
madre
cuando
members
health
program
park
technology
homemaker
obstacles
empiezan
necesitan
workplace
developed
contribute
education
boston
counseling
assistive
d-snp
cancer
thing
it's
lost
isn't
instead
difference
improve
culture
makes
lives
years
around
moments
trust
march
holly
matter
minute
show
afford
system
quezada
changed
local
everyone
digital
tasks
business
things
options
want
father
back
voice
hoy
ips
padre
porque
para
begin
thank
wagner
feel
will
officers
muchas
barriers
idioma
like
since
real
una
area
lowell
must
work
capacity
left
two
referred
barbara
hudivasi
familias
serve
needed
donde
online
como
resources
time
meet
staff
gaps
center
cover
writing
today
someone
many
meeting
federal
families
scpd
meals
learned
clear
solo
afternoon
mother
equity
talk
amp
ozek
needs
jonathan
family
built
prepara
available
often
even
also
day
madre
cuando
health
park
program

What We Heard Across Communities

Participants spoke about the barriers they face, the supports that make a difference, and where systems are falling short.

ADVOCACY AND CHANGE

"Advocacy has taught me that I do not need to conform to the world but that the world needs to change."

Catherine Cuddy
MetroWest

TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD

"What if we moved from a cliff to a ramp, creating a smoother, supported path that promotes autonomy, dignity, and quality of life?"

Meghan Chapman
MetroWest

LANGUAGE, FAMILY & LEADERSHIP

"When parents are supported in their native language, everything changes. They begin to understand. They begin to participate. They begin to advocate. And eventually… they begin to lead."

Raquel Quezada
North of Boston

SELF-DIRECTION & COMMUNITY

"Our son, Kevin, is a 32-year-old man with autism, intellectual disabilities, and limited verbal abilities. Kevin, with the assistance of his family, has created a successful self-directed community-based day & residential program."

Cindy & John O'Connor
North of Boston

ISSUES AND PRIORITIES RAISED

Housing & Community Living • Employment • Workforce & Supports
Navigating Systems • Accessibility • Transportation • Transitions

Connecting People with Resources

Each *Meeting the Moment* event included a resource fair, giving attendees an opportunity to connect directly with state agencies, disability organizations, advocates, local commissions, and service providers.

60+

RESOURCE FAIR PARTNERS





- **Local disability commissions**
- **Disability organizations**
- **State agencies**
- **Advocates**
- **Service providers**









Kayla Snover. 2023. colored pencil on paper. 4.25 x 5.5 in..
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5. Subcommittee Activities

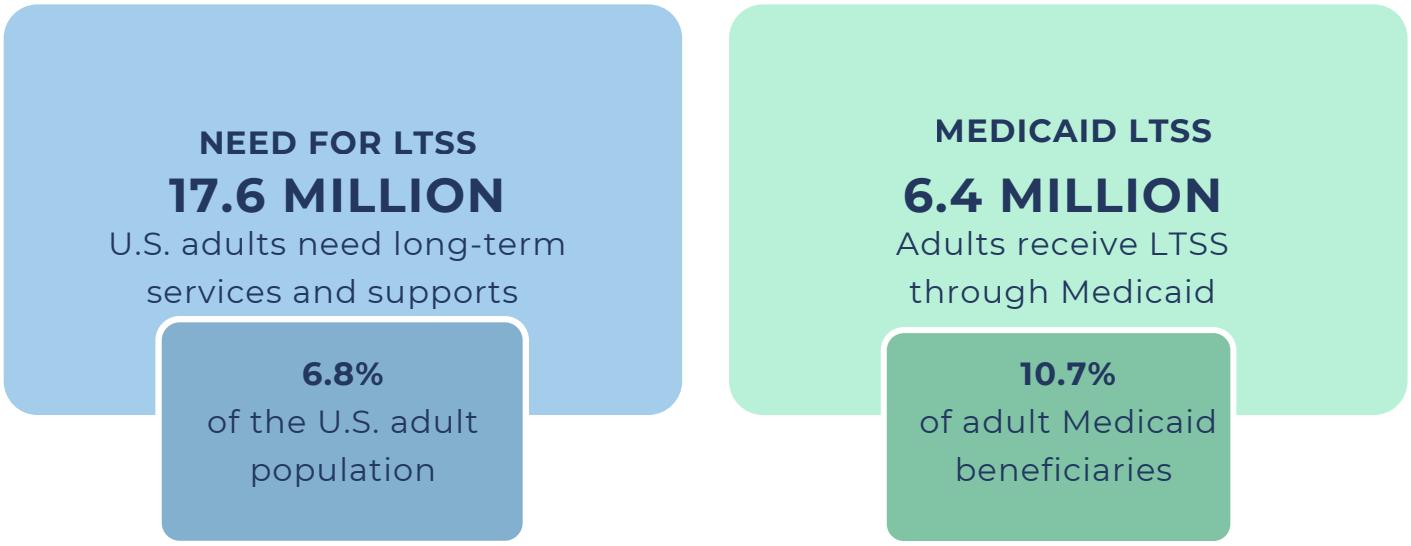
5.1 Long Term Services and Supports & Health Equity Subcommittee

Throughout FY26, the LTSS and Health Equity Subcommittee brought together researchers, state agencies, advocates, and community members to discuss issues affecting people with disabilities across the Commonwealth. The year's discussions included **home- and community-based services, accessible and affordable housing, Medicaid and the PCA program, care coordination, and discrimination in health care.**

August 2025 | Community Living and Access to Services

Monika Mitra, Joe Caldwell, Sydney Pickern, Teresa Nguyen, and Laurin Bixby of the Lurie Institute for Disability Policy at Brandeis University shared research on home- and community-based services, housing, the direct care workforce, self-direction, and transitions from institutional settings. Their work also highlighted racial and ethnic disparities in access to self-directed services and gaps in Medicaid race and ethnicity data.

Who Needs LTSS? Who Receives Medicaid LTSS?



Source: Lurie Institute for Disability Policy presentation to the LTSS & Health Equity Subcommittee, August 2025.

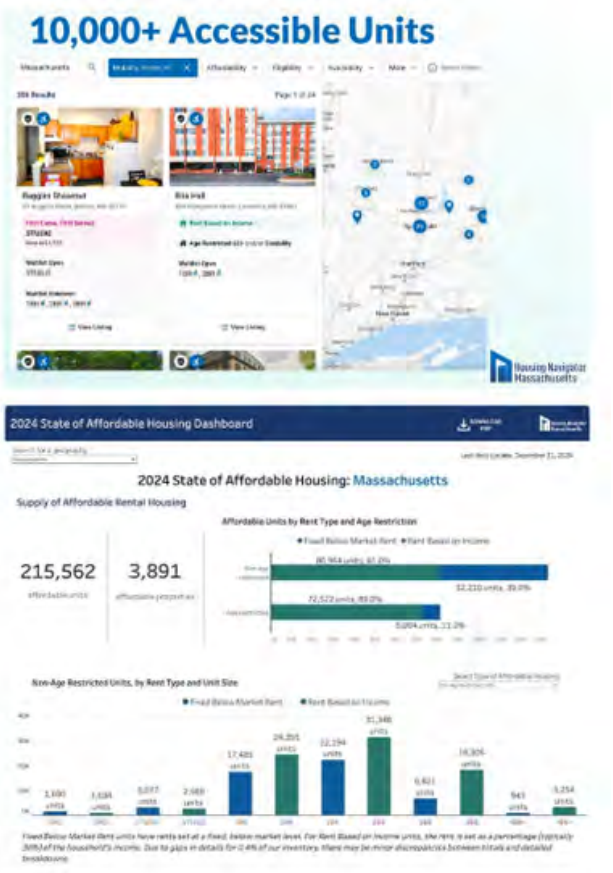
5.1 Long Term Services and Supports & Health Equity Subcommittee (Cont'd)

November 2025 | Accessible and Affordable Housing

Tori Decker, Emma Rial, and Abby Werner of Housing Navigator Massachusetts discussed **the statewide affordable housing search platform and the challenges people face when housing must be both affordable and accessible.** The platform includes filters for affordability, eligibility, and accessibility features, including mobility, vision, and hearing access.

- **216,000+ affordable units** listed statewide.
- **100+ property owners** list housing on the platform.
- Accessibility filters include **mobility, vision, and hearing**.
- The platform includes major types of income-restricted rental housing, but **does not include medical facilities such as nursing homes and rest homes.**





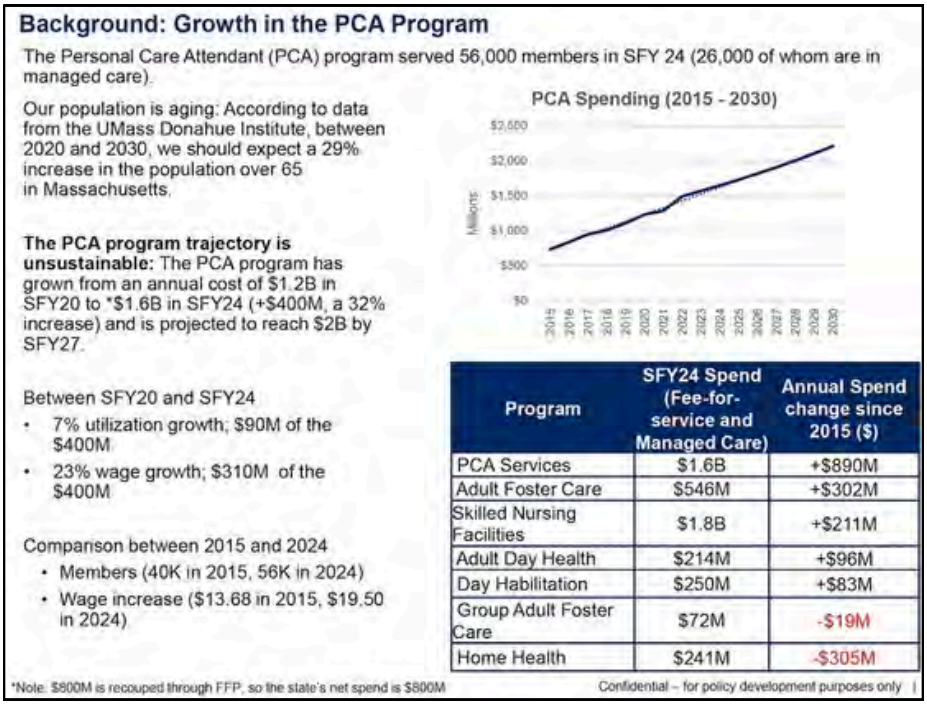
Source: Housing Navigator MA Presentation

5.1 Long Term Services and Supports & Health Equity Subcommittee (Cont'd)

January 2026 | Federal Changes, Medicaid and the PCA Program

Leslie Darcy, Chief of Staff for MassHealth's Office of Long-Term Services and Supports, provided an update on anticipated federal changes affecting Medicaid eligibility, state funding, health coverage, and the PCA program.

- **$3.5 billion estimated Commonwealth budget gap** associated with anticipated federal changes.
- $300 million estimated Health Safety Net shortfall.
- Beginning in January 2027, **certain non-disabled adults ages 19–54 would be subject to an 80-hour-per-month work or volunteer requirement, with exemptions for several groups, including people with disabilities.**
- **Medicaid eligibility re-determinations would increase to every six months** for certain members beginning in 2027; people with disabilities and Medicare beneficiaries would remain on an annual schedule.
- Retroactive Medicaid coverage would decrease from three months to one month in 2027.
- Massachusetts planned an additional $250 million to support middle-income residents who do not qualify for MassHealth, along with an approximately **$600 million state-level credit program** intended to help offset federal coverage changes.



Background: Growth in the PCA Program

The Personal Care Attendant (PCA) program served 56,000 members in SFY 24 (26,000 of whom are in managed care).

Our population is aging: According to data from the UMass Donahue Institute, between 2020 and 2030, we should expect a 29% increase in the population over 65 in Massachusetts.

The PCA program trajectory is unsustainable: The PCA program has grown from an annual cost of $1.2B in SFY20 to *$1.6B in SFY24 (+$400M, a 32% increase) and is projected to reach $2B by SFY27.

Between SFY20 and SFY24
- 7% utilization growth; $90M of the $400M
- 23% wage growth; $310M of the $400M

Comparison between 2015 and 2024
- Members (40K in 2015, 56K in 2024)
- Wage increase ($13.68 in 2015, $19.50 in 2024)

PCA Spending (2015 - 2030)

Program	SFY24 Spend (Fee-for-service and Managed Care)	Annual Spend change since 2015 ($)
PCA Services	$1.6B	+$890M
Adult Foster Care	$546M	+$302M
Skilled Nursing Facilities	$1.8B	+$211M
Adult Day Health	$214M	+$96M
Day Habilitation	$250M	+$83M
Group Adult Foster Care	$72M	-$19M
Home Health	$241M	-$305M

*Note: $800M is recouped through FFP, so the state's net spend is $800M

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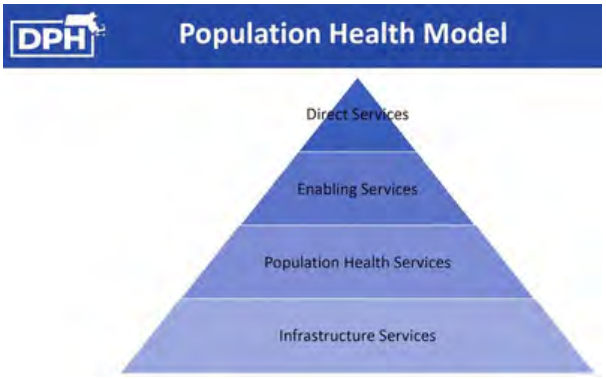
Source: PCA Working Group Final Recommendations Report (November 2025)

5.1 Long Term Services and Supports & Health Equity Subcommittee (Cont'd)

April 2026 | Care Coordination for Children and Families

Patty Loza and Touria Hafsi of the Department of Public Health's **CCATER Center presented on training and technical assistance for MassHealth CARES for Kids providers serving children and youth with special health needs.**

- CCATER has been working with 5 providers to achieve its goal.
- Its work includes **care coordination, family engagement, and support for providers serving children with complex health needs.**
- The CCATER team includes a family engagement specialist, with **an emphasis on lived experience and family perspective.**



CCATER Presentation

ASAN Presentation

Source: CCATER Presentation (April 2026)

May 2026 | Disability Discrimination in Health Care

Colin Killick, Executive Director of the Autistic Self Advocacy Network, presented Defending Disabled Life: Community Response to Crisis Standards of Care, addressing disability discrimination in health care and lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Crisis standards of care raised **concerns about disabled people being de-prioritized for treatment.**
- **Quality-Adjusted Life Years (QALYs)** can disadvantage people with disabilities when health conditions are assigned a lower value.
- In one example presented, a year of life with severe epilepsy was valued **at 55% of a non-disabled year.**
- Disability advocates successfully challenged discriminatory crisis standards in several states during the pandemic.
- S.869 would prohibit certain forms of disability discrimination in health care, including protections related to crisis standards of care and the use of QALYs.

Source: Autistic Self Advocacy Network, Defending Disabled Life: Community Response to Crisis Standards of Care, May 2026.

5.2 Disability Employment Subcommittee

Throughout FY26, the Disability Employment Subcommittee focused on **employment and transition opportunities for people with disabilities, workplace inclusion, state disability employment policy, and employer practices.** Presentations also addressed **family engagement in transition planning, employment incentives, and barriers facing veterans entering the civilian workforce.**

August 2025 | Transition to Employment and Independent Adulthood

Jennifer Magnuson, Chief of Staff, and Elyse Forbush, Director of Community and Employment Development, presented on Run the Gamut, a **two-year transition and workforce program for autistic young adults ages 18–24**.

- **3:1 student-to-staff ratio**, with up to 20 students per cohort.
- Programming focuses on skills connected to **employment, independent living, and individual goals.**





Source: Run the Gamut, Transition to Employment and Independent Adulthood, August 2025.

5.2 Disability Employment Subcommittee (Cont'd)

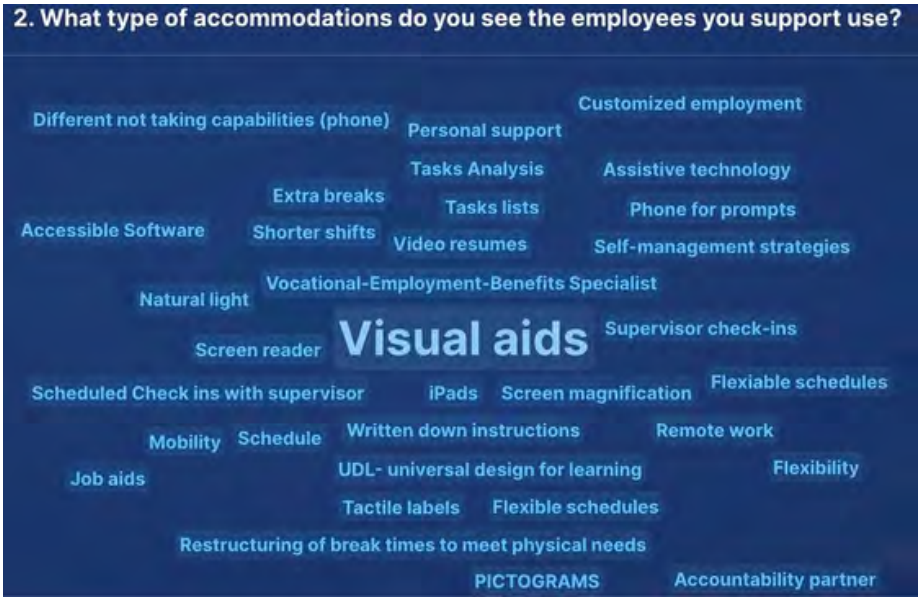
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October 2025 | MA APSE Employment Matters Conference

The Subcommittee participated in the **Massachusetts Association of People Supporting Employment First Employment Matters! Partners in Progress Conference** in Worcester. Co-Chair Gyasi Burks-Abbott, subcommittee member Kathy Petkauskos, and Erin Weinman of MicroTek, a 2023 Commission Employer Award recipient, led a workshop titled **Strength in Support: Tools, Resources, and a Call to Action for Disability Employment**, with support from fellow Co-Chair Rachel Stanton. The session focused on practical resources and approaches to supporting inclusive employment across the Commonwealth.

Watch our Employers and Employees perspective video here or scan the QR code!





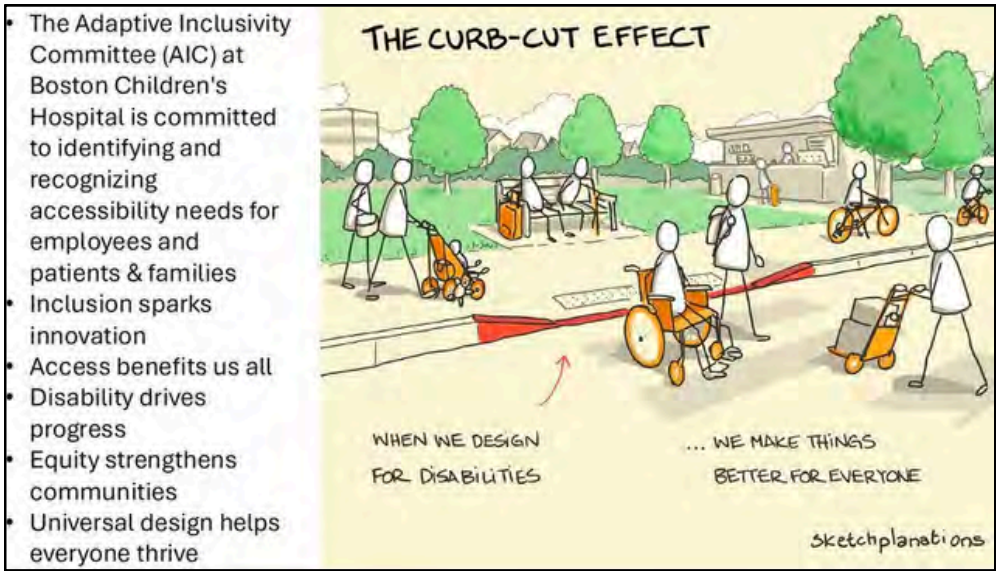
5.2 Disability Employment Subcommittee (Cont'd)

November 2025 | Disability Employee-Led Groups

Kristen Grip and Katie McCarthy of Boston Children's Hospital's Disability Alliance Employee-Led Group presented on the **role employee-led disability groups can play in workplace inclusion.** The Disability Alliance organizes its work around Education, Community, and Advocacy.

- The group provides **educational programming, employee experience panels, disability resources, and outside speakers.**
- Areas identified for improvement included **accommodations, retention and advancement, education, and supplier inclusion.**





Source: Boston Children's Hospital, Disability Alliance Employee-Led Group, November 2025.

5.2 Disability Employment Subcommittee (Cont'd)

January 2026 | Disability Employment Policy Options for States

Katia Albanese, Project Director, and Dina Klimkina, Policy Director, presented on the **State Exchange on Employment & Disability (SEED) and examples of disability employment policies** being used by states across the country.

- Policy areas included **career readiness, behavioral health at work, stay-at-work/return-to-work, private-sector engagement, entrepreneurship, interagency coordination, and State as a Model Employer.**
- Examples included state strategies for **recruitment, hiring, accommodations, accessibility, and accountability.**
- New York's State as a Model Employer approach includes **agency strategic plans, accessibility audits, accommodation monitoring, data accountability, and proactive recruitment.**

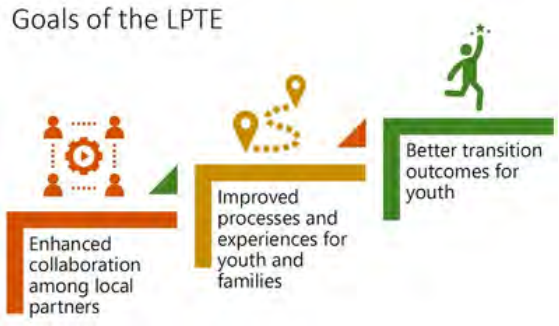


Source: State Exchange on Employment & Disability (SEED), Disability Employment Policy Options for States January 2026.

April 2026 | Listening to Families About Transition to Employment

The LPTE Team presented findings from work conducted through the **Lawrence Partnership for Transition to Employment** on how transition-age youth with intellectual and developmental disabilities are being prepared for adult life. LPTE was established in 2021 through a five-year Administration for Community Living grant.

- Survey participation **increased from fewer than 20 responses to 205** after LPTE partnered with Lawrence Public Schools to expand outreach by email and text.
- Only **12%** reported access to pre-employment training.
- Families' experiences pointed **to gaps in how students are prepared for employment and connected to services after high school.**



Source: Lawrence Partnership for Transition to Employment (LPTE), Listening to Families About Transition to Employment, April 2026.

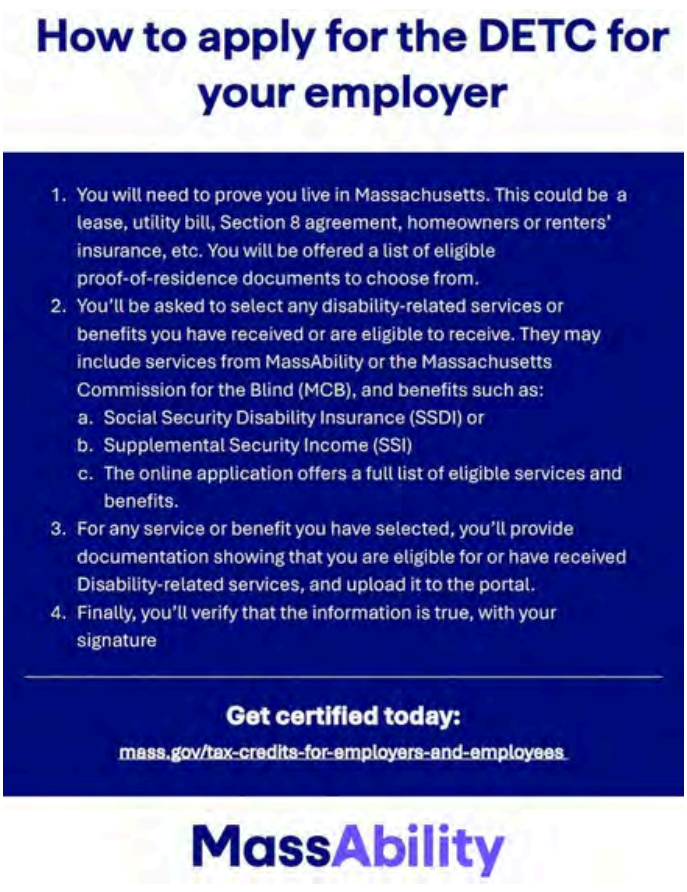
5.2 Disability Employment Subcommittee (Cont'd)

May 2026 | Disability Employment Tax Credit

Joseph Reale of MassAbility provided an update on the **Massachusetts Disability Employment Tax Credit** (DETC), an incentive for employers that hire qualified employees with disabilities.

- Employees must work for an employer **for at least 12 months**.
- Employers may receive **up to $5,000 or 30% of wages** in the first year.
- In subsequent years, **the credit is up to $2,000 or 30% of wages**.
- MassAbility established **an online certification process** and coordinates certification with employers and the Department of Revenue.





Source: MassAbility, Massachusetts Disability Employment Tax Credit (DETC), May 2026.

5.2 Disability Employment Subcommittee (Cont'd)

May 2026 | Veterans, Disability and Employment

Scott Pitta, Chief of Staff for the Office of the Veteran Advocate, presented on veterans with disabilities, **available services, and barriers to civilian employment.**

- Service-connected disability does not mean inability to work, and **many veterans with disabilities remain active in the workforce.**
- Invisible disabilities can include **PTSD, hearing loss, and chronic pain**, making accommodations an important part of workforce participation.
- Available supports include **Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment, education benefits, employment assistance, workplace accommodations, health care, housing, and caregiver supports**.



Source: Massachusetts Office of the Veteran Advocate, Veterans, Disability and Employment, May 2026.

May 2026 | SEED Massachusetts Disability Employment Policy Crosswalk

Following the State Exchange on Employment & Disability's January presentation, the Commission continued working with SEED to look more closely at Massachusetts' existing disability employment policies and practices and examples from other states. SEED developed a **policy crosswalk for this work.**

- The crosswalk organized **Massachusetts policies and practices across areas including State as a Model Employer, career readiness and economic mobility,** private-sector engagement, stay-at-work and return-to-work, and interagency coordination.
- It identified existing Massachusetts efforts alongside policy approaches adopted in other states, **providing a basis for identifying possible gaps and areas for further exploration.**

Source: SEED, Employment Policy Crosswalk, May 2026.

5.3 Workforce Supports Subcommittee

Throughout FY26, the Workforce Supports Subcommittee focused on the workforce that provides services and supports to people with disabilities. Members heard from state agencies, researchers, and providers about **persistent workforce shortages, recruitment and retention challenges, compensation, and the need for stronger training and career pathways.** The Subcommittee also explored **registered apprenticeship as one potential strategy** for strengthening the human services workforce.

August 2025 | Health and Human Services Workforce Investments

Gina Frey, Workforce Development Manager at the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS), provided an update on **statewide efforts to address workforce shortages and retention challenges** across health and human services. Priority workforce areas included nursing, behavioral health, primary care, and home- and community-based services.

- A **$46 million ARPA-funded grant program** supported training, recruitment, and retention in home- and community-based services. Of 82 grantees, 60 were direct support providers.
- **$182 million had supported student loan repayment** through the MA Repay Program over the previous two years.
- **Apprenticeship and internship pipelines** supported through workforce investments had resulted in more than 2,000 new certifications.
- Behavioral health workforce efforts included **a $78 million investment** aimed at reducing barriers to training and licensure and a **$50 million stipend initiative for behavioral health students.** More than 2,500 people had benefited from the stipend initiative at the time of the presentation.



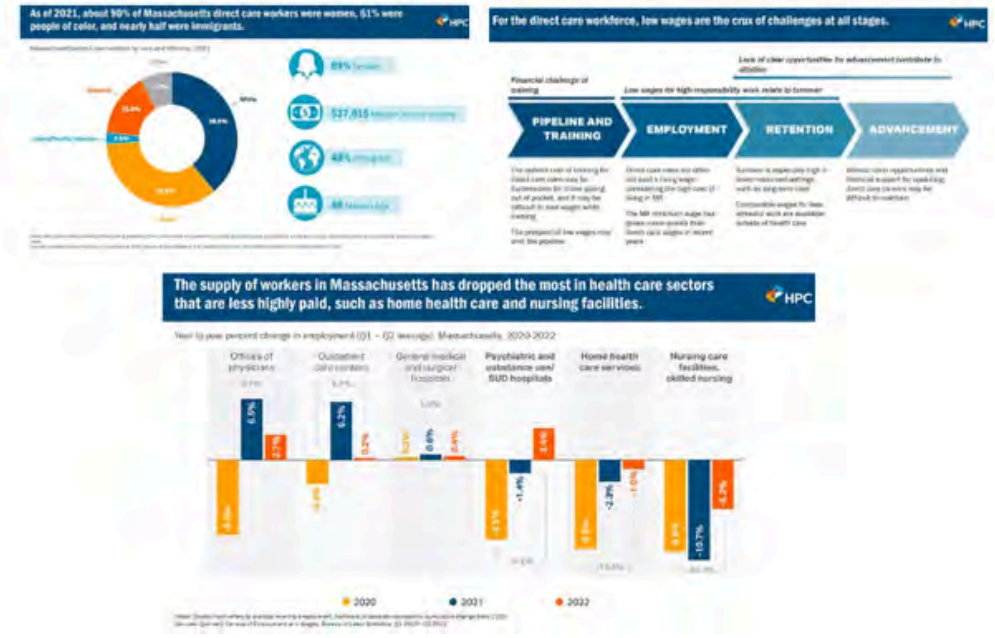
Source: Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS), Health and Human Services Workforce Investments, August 2025.

5.3 Workforce Supports Subcommittee (Cont'd)

November 2025 | Behavioral Health and Direct Care Workforce

Amy Doyle, MSW, MPH, Director of the Behavioral Health Workforce Center at the Massachusetts Health Policy Commission, presented on the newly established Behavioral Health Workforce Center and the Health Policy Commission's broader workforce research. The Center's work is organized around four areas: **recruitment and retention, capacity building, diversity, equity and inclusion, and sustainability.**

- Low wages and limited opportunities for advancement **contribute to recruitment and retention problems.**
- Nationally, **44% of direct care workers lived below 200% of the federal poverty level and 42% received public assistance**, based on research cited in the presentation.
- Training costs, uncompensated clinical hours, student debt, burnout, and the cost of living in Massachusetts **create additional workforce pressures.**



Source: Massachusetts Health Policy Commission, Behavioral Health Workforce Center Overview and Workforce Research, November 2025.

5.3 Workforce Supports Subcommittee (Cont'd)

January 2026 | Developmental Disability Provider Workforce

Stephanie Costa, President and CEO, and Mandy Nichols, Vice President of the Association of Developmental Disabilities Providers (ADDP), presented findings from **ADDP's 2025 Workforce Metrics Survey**, the fourth survey in the series since 2023. The survey included 102 organizations, **representing 77% of ADDP members, and covered residential, shared living, adult foster care, day habilitation, community-based day supports, and supported employment.**

- Overall vacancies declined from **19% to 15%.**
- Adult Long-Term Residential vacancies declined from **19% to 16%.**
- Community-Based Day Supports vacancies declined from **20% to 14%.**
- Licensed Practical Nurse vacancies remained particularly high at 28%, **despite declining from 36%.**
- Clinician vacancies declined from 21% to 19%, while **Direct Support Professional vacancies declined from 19% to 15%.**



Source: Association of Developmental Disabilities Providers (ADDP), 2025 Workforce Metrics Survey, January 2026.

5.3 Workforce Supports Subcommittee (Cont'd)

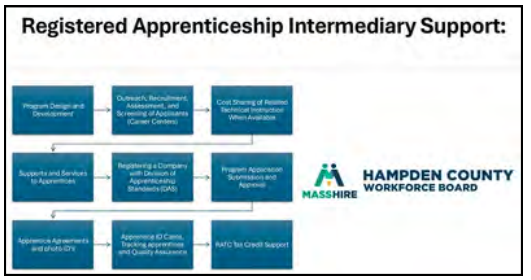
February–May 2026 | Apprenticeship Pathways in Human Services

The Subcommittee explored registered apprenticeship as a strategy to strengthen the human services workforce. In February, Undersecretary of Labor Josh Cutler and Apprenticeship Liaison Ammarah Rehman discussed opportunities to expand the model. In May, the Subcommittee convened **"Addressing Workforce Barriers Through Apprenticeships,"** bringing together the **Division of Apprenticeship Standards, MassHire Hampden County Workforce Board, and UMass Chan Medical School/ForHealth Consulting** to help providers understand how apprenticeship programs and intermediaries can support workforce development..

- **2,000 hours** of structured on-the-job training
- **150 hours** of related instruction each year
- Progressive wage increases as skills increase
- **Industry-recognized credential** upon completion
- **1,000+ occupations** can use the registered apprenticeship model
- **Intermediaries** can assist employers with **program design, recruitment, training, funding, and registration**

From Discussion to Action

Co-sponsored by the **Association for Behavioral Healthcare** and the **Association of Developmental Disabilities Providers**, the May 28 webinar led to a successful **GROW Intermediary Hub** application from **WORK Inc.**, which is partnering with **UMass Boston's Institute for Community Inclusion** and **Road to Responsibility** to **expand apprenticeship opportunities for direct support professionals**.





45+

WEBINAR PARTICIPANTS

1

APPLICATION SUBMITTED AND AWARDED

Award announced in October 2026, following the FY26 reporting period.



Chuck Johnson. Untitled. 2026. acrylic on paper. 4.25 x 5.5 in.
Vinfen's Gateway Arts

6. Key Themes & Findings

Throughout FY26, many of the same issues surfaced in different settings, from Commission and subcommittee meetings to statewide community conversations, Advisory Council discussions, and presentations from state agencies, researchers, advocates, and community partners. Employment, workforce capacity, accessibility, health care, housing, transportation, and community supports often overlapped, reflecting how people with disabilities experience these systems in their daily lives.

ACCESS TO SUPPORTS

Whether in health care, LTSS, housing, education, employment, or community services, **the existence of a program does not always translate into meaningful access.**

WORKFORCE CAPACITY

Staffing shortages, compensation, retention, training, and workforce pipelines affect the availability and sustainability of services across multiple systems.

EMPLOYMENT & OPPORTUNITY

Meaningful paid employment requires inclusive **hiring, accommodations, individualized supports, career development, apprenticeships, volunteer opportunities, and stronger connections between education and workforce systems.**

People with Disabilities

at the center of systems, services & decisions

ACCESSIBILITY & INCLUSION

Physical, digital, communication, programmatic, and attitudinal barriers continue to shape participation in work, health care, public programs, and community life.

TRANSITIONS & NAVIGATIONS

People can encounter gaps when moving between schools, adult services, health programs, agencies, or other systems, **particularly when eligibility and responsibilities change.**

COMMUNITY LIVING

Housing, transportation, health care, direct supports, recreation, and community-based services are **interconnected parts of independence and participation**.

7. Looking Ahead to FY27

The Commission enters FY27 building on the relationships, community input, and issues that shaped its work over the past year. The Commission's approach remains grounded in three connected roles: **Convene. Collaborate. Communicate.**

01

CONVENE

Keep bringing the conversation into communities.

Continue *Meeting the Moment* across Massachusetts, building on FY26 conversations in MetroWest and North of Boston and the July 2026 convening in Western Massachusetts, with Southern Massachusetts scheduled in January 2027.

02

COLLABORATE

Turn connections into sustained work.

Continue working with Commissioners, the Advisory Council, state agencies, disability organizations, researchers, employers, and community partners on issues that intersect across employment, workforce supports, LTSS, health equity, accessibility, and community living.

03

COMMUNICATE

Elevate what the Commission is hearing.

Bring community experiences, recurring issues, data, and promising practices into Commission discussions and public-facing work, while continuing to connect people with information and resources.

ALSO IN FY27

Disability Employment & NDEAM

The Commission will continue its focus on disability employment through its NDEAM celebration, recognizing legislators, employers, and leaders advancing inclusive employment. The event will also convene a panel on Artificial Intelligence, Disability, and the Future of Work to discuss AI in hiring, workplace accessibility, and what these changes could mean for workers with disabilities.

8. Appendix

8.1 Commission Membership & Statutory Authority

The Commission is guided by the leadership and expertise of the following members, who bring diverse perspectives and a shared commitment to advancing its mission:

Gyasi Burks-Abbott, Commission Elected Disability Employment Subcommittee Co-Chair
Self-Advocate, Faculty, LEND Program, Boston Children's Hospital and UMass Boston's Institute for Community Inclusion
Appointed by the Governor

Charles Carr, Commission Elected Long Term Services and Supports and Health Equity Subcommittee Co-Chair
Legislative Liaison for the Disability Policy Consortium
Appointed by Disability Policy Consortium

The Honorable Denise C. Garlick
Commission Elected Chair
Appointed by the Governor

Nancy Garr-Colzie
Member & Board Chair, Worcester Disability Commission, Your Access Advocates
Appointed by the Governor

Victoria Gill
Director of Learning, Development & Innovative Projects, Disabled Persons Protection Commission
Appointed by Disabled Persons Protection Commission

Craig Hall
Executive Director, Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council
Appointed by Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council

Senator Vanna Howard
State Senator, Massachusetts Senate
Appointed by the Speaker of the House while serving as a State Representative; elected to the Massachusetts Senate on March 18, 2026

Rachel Kaprielian, Commission Elected Workforce Supports Subcommittee Co-Chair
Chief Executive Officer, Triangle, Inc.
Appointed by the Governor

8. Appendix

8.1 Commission Membership & Statutory Authority (Cont'd)

Representative Jay Livingstone
State Representative, Massachusetts House of Representatives
Appointed by the Speaker of the House

Ann Lynch
Assistant Attorney General, Disability Rights Coordinator, Massachusetts Attorney General's Office
Appointed by the Attorney General's Office

Representative John Marsi
State Representative, Massachusetts House of Representatives
Appointed by the House Minority Leader

Regina Marshall
Chief Executive Officer, Advocates
Appointed by the Senate President

Oswald Mondejar, Commission Elected Clerk
President, Mucho Gusto Consulting
Appointed by the Governor

Bridget Murphy
Project Manager, Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth, William Francis Galvin
Appointed by the State Secretary

Senator Patrick O'Connor
State Senator, Massachusetts Senate
Appointed by the Senate Minority Leader

Angela Ortiz
Chief Executive Officer, Massachusetts Health Council
Appointed by the Governor

Kathy Petkauskos
Executive Director, Workplace Equity and Inclusion, Work Without Limits, ForHealth Consulting, University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School
Appointed by the University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School

8. Appendix

8.1 Commission Membership & Statutory Authority (Cont'd)

Carl Richardson, Commission Elected Long Term Services and Supports and Health Equity Subcommittee Co-Chair and Treasurer
ADA Coordinator/504 Diversity Officer, Massachusetts State House
Appointed by the Senate President

Representative Lindsay Sabadosa
State Representative, Massachusetts House of Representatives
Appointed by the Speaker of the House

Leo Sarkissian, Commission Elected Workforce Supports Subcommittee Co-Chair
The Arc of Massachusetts
Appointed by the Governor

Lexi Semanchik
HR Marketing & Communications Specialist
State Treasurer and Receiver General's Office Treasurer's Office Designee #2

Rachel Stanton
Investor Relations & Communications Designer, Clean Water Trust | Debt Management
Treasurer's Office Designee

Meghan Todd
Grants Manager, City of Framingham
Appointed by the Senate President

Christopher White, Commission Elected Vice-Chair
President/CEO, Road to Responsibility, Inc.
Appointed by the Association of Developmental Disabilities Providers, Inc.

Commissioners Emeriti

Representative Gerard Cassidy - Carla Kath - Representative Kay Khan - Andrew Levrault-
Felix Martinez - Representative Mathew Muratore - Nancy Rumbolt-Trzcisnki - Dan Shannon
Paul W. Spooner - Kerry Thompson - Melinda Troy - Liz Zelnick

8. Appendix

8.1 Commission Membership & Statutory Authority (Cont'd)

The Massachusetts Permanent Commission on the Status of Persons with Disabilities is an independent permanent state agency established by Chapter 253 of the Acts of 2020, which added Section 74 to Chapter 3 of the Massachusetts General Laws. **The Commission's legislative mandate is to advance the cause of all persons with disabilities in the Commonwealth**.
Its statutory responsibilities include:

i. Studying, reviewing, advising, and reporting on:

- A. Disparities across service or geographic areas concerning the range of available options within state disability services;
- B. The status of transportation for persons with disabilities, including access to employment opportunities;
- C. The effect of public assistance for persons with disabilities as it pertains to earning limits and eligibility for subsidies for food, housing, child care, and other benefits;
- D. Establishing school-to-work activities for transition-aged youth with disabilities that build a bridge to self-sufficiency and engage school supports, family members, and employers;
- E. The status of the strategic plan to make the Commonwealth a model employer by increasing the number of people with disabilities employed by the executive branch;
- F. Enhanced enforcement of state requirements that promote diversity in state government employment; and
- G. The number of persons with disabilities who apply for state disability services and are unsuccessful in receiving services.

ii. Facilitating and promoting public awareness to encourage inclusion of persons with disabilities as employees and vendors in both the public and private sectors, including underrepresented business sectors of all sizes.

iii. Assessing programs and practices in all state agencies as they affect persons with disabilities, as the Commission deems necessary and appropriate.

iv. Advising executive and legislative bodies regarding the impact of proposed legislation on persons with disabilities.

v. Promoting and facilitating collaboration among local disability commissions, disability rights advocacy organizations, and disability employment service providers.

The Commission shall annually, not later than October 31, report the results of its findings and activities of the preceding fiscal year and its recommendations, which may include draft legislation, **to the Governor, the House and Senate Committees on Ways and Means, the Clerks of the House of Representatives and the Senate, the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities and the Joint Committee on Labor and Workforce Development.**

8. Appendix

8.2 Advisory Council Membership

Established in FY26, the Advisory Council brings additional lived experience, subject-matter expertise, and cross-sector perspectives to the Commission's work.

Shakira Alvarez
Program Coordinator
TRIO Student Support Services Program

Joe R. Buizon
Director, Programs and Services
Massachusetts Commission for the Blind

Kristin Britton
Director of Disability Access
Department of Transitional Assistance

Erika Burrows
Chief Executive Officer
The Center of Hope Foundation

Lauren Baczewski
Director of Research & Education,
Neurodiversity Center for Excellence, Curry College

Nora Bent
Director of Government Affairs and Strategic Partnerships, The Arc of Massachusetts

Helen Corbett
Community Advisor

Steven Croteau
Director, Veterans Bonus Division,
Office of the Massachusetts State Treasurer

Becky Curran
Senior Director, Stakeholder Engagement
Disability:IN

David Estrada
SRN Research and DEIA Disability Program Manager, Spaulding New England Regional Spinal Cord Injury Center

Collin Fedor
Deputy Chief of Staff, MassHealth,
Executive Office of Health and Human Services

Elyse Forbush
Director of Employment and Community Development, Run The Gamut

Jenna Guilbeault
Community Outreach Officer, Lowell Five Bank

Manny Marcelino Guerra
Co-Founder/Manager
Wheels On the Bus Transportation LLC

Nicole Godaire
Chief Executive Officer
Brain Injury Association of Massachusetts

Lynn Gonsalves
Executive Director
Partners for Youth with Disabilities

Ryan Jackson
Communications Coordinator, Zoo New England

Keith Jones
Self Advocate

8.2 Advisory Council Membership

Raquel Quezada
Founder and CEO, Fundación Cambiando el Mundo de Personas con Discapacidad
Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council Chair

Parker Koppelman
Chief Risk Officer, Liberty Mutual Insurance

Andrew Levrault
Deputy General Counsel,
MA Disabled Persons Protection Commission

Barbara L'Italien
Executive Director, Disability Law Center

Dr. Linda Long Bellil
Assistant Professor, Department of Family Medicine and Community Health, Commonwealth Medicine, University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School

Allan Motenko
Executive Director
Massachusetts Office on Disability

Jody Nash
Board of Directors, Cardinal Cushing Centers

Nassira Nicola
Language Access Coordinator, Massachusetts Department of Public Health

Sarah Peterson
Commissioner
Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services

Ive Peña Gonzalez
Chief Engagement Officer, Eastern Bank

Richard Rodriguez
Attorney, Law Office of Richard Rodriguez

Cambria Russell, Ph.D.
Associate Executive Director
Federation for Children with Special Needs

Kay Schoucair
Senior Organizer & Advocacy Communications Coordinator, Boston Center for Independent Living

Dr. Opeoluwa Sotonwa
Commissioner
Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Laura Stout
Director of Contract Operations
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts

Megan Sullivan
Director of Inclusive Pedagogy,
Boston University

Maura Sullivan
Chief Executive Director
The Arc of Massachusetts

Olivia Thompson
Administrative Associate, UU Wellesley Hills

Sonja Unica
Employee Experience Liaison, Merck

Erin Weinman
Executive Vice President, MicroTek, Inc.

Joannah Whitney
Community Consultant, Greenfield, MA

Toni Wolf
Commissioner
MassAbility

FY26 ANNUAL REPORT

Reporting Period: JULY 2025–JUNE 2026
(As of October 31, 2026)

MASSACHUSETTS
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES



Contact Us:
Massachusetts Permanent Commission on the Status of Persons with Disabilities