

Legislative Priorities FY 2025

Independent Living Centers Line Item 4120-0200

\$10 Million for 10 Independent Living Centers (increase of 2 million)

The ten Independent Living Centers (ILCs) that serve Massachusetts are advocating for a funding increase to Line Item 4120-0200 in the FY25 budget to \$10 Million. This funding increase is imperative to ensure we can maintain our services, hire, and retain staff, and ensure the individuals we serve can remain living independently in the community.

Independent Living Centers are funded in a separate line item with pass through funds, and not through rate setting.

Please consider the following:

- 25% and 10% funding increase CIS (Community Integrated Services) and ABI (Acquired Brain Injury) vendors have received in FY 24 and in FY 25 budget through rate setting, specifically for staff.
- 1 – Number of line-item funding increases ILCs have received since 2016.
- Independent Living Centers have continued to respond and adapt to meet the needs of our consumers, ensuring individuals with disabilities continued to receive Independent Living Services without disruption.
- Massachusetts IL Centers need state funding in order to meet demands for services for consumers who have increasingly complex needs. Additional funding will support:
 - Nursing Facility Transitions to community settings
 - Employment
 - Outreach to impoverished, unserved, and underserved
 - Education
 - Core Services of Information and Referral, Advocacy, Skills Training, Peer Counselling, and Transitions.
- ILCs are a requirement of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, there are 10 ILCs in MA.
- ILCs are consumer directed, consumer controlled, cross disability non-profit agencies and serve tens of thousands of individuals annually.
- ILCs are critical in keeping individuals with disabilities independent, in the community and out of costly institutional settings.
- ILCs support individuals with disabilities in going back to work and being productive in their communities.

AN ACT BUILDING A MORE ACCESSIBLE MASSACHUSETTS

S.1553 & H.2291

- We support AAB (Architectural Access Board) regulations that would align MA regulations with Federal Regulations.
- Bring MA into compliance with Federal Law by aligning state standards with the 2010 federal standards for accessible design.
- Make housing accessible by requiring adaptable units in renovated buildings.
- Remove barriers to work by ensuring access for all individuals in both customer and employee areas.
- When enacted, S.1553 and H.2291 will prevent lawsuits and simplify development by addressing access problems in the blueprint phase instead of in a courtroom after development has been completed.

Low-Income Accessible Housing

Low-income accessible housing is a critical need in the MetroWest area. MWCIL supports the Governor's Bond Bill as an opportunity to help alleviate the housing crisis the state is facing and encourage the following changes:

1. **Changes to the Alternative Housing Voucher Program (AHVP):** AHVP is a voucher program for low-income adults with disabilities age 60 and under. The Governor's version of the Affordable Homes Act includes project-based vouchers for AHVP. We propose that the following programmatic changes also be included to align more closely with the proposed "An Act to create affordable homes for persons with disabilities" ([S.884/H.1305](#)):
 - a. Increase the maximum eligibility age from 60 to 62
 - b. Updated language for persons with disabilities
 - c. A payment standard of 120% Small Area Fair Market Rent (SAFMR)
 - d. Unspent funds remain with the program rather than revert to the general fund
2. **\$60 million for the Home Modification Loan Program (HMLP):** This program provides funding to modify homes of individuals or families with disabilities or seniors so that they may maintain residency or return home from institutional settings. We support the level funding of this program, as outlined in the Governor's version.

3. **\$110 million for Community Based Housing (CBH):** CBH funds development and redevelopment of housing for people with disabilities who are leaving or at risk of entering an institutional facility such as a nursing home. The Governor's version of the AHA allocates \$55 million for this program. We propose an allocation of \$110 million because of limited housing options for people wishing to transition from nursing facilities. EOHHS has cited limited housing options in its response to the ADA Olmstead lawsuit *Marsters v. Healey*, previously *Simmons v. Baker*, which alleges the state is violating the ADA and wrongly keeping people in nursing homes.
4. **Establishment of a commission for accessible housing:** This would examine new accessibility features for housing that would benefit a broader range of people with disabilities beyond those with physical disabilities, including people with autism, mental health conditions, and dementia, among others.
- MWCIL continues to request support for:
 - Rental Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) Program
 - Emergency Rental and Mortgage Assistance (ERMA) Program
 - Tenancy Preservation Program (TPP)
 - Family Shelters, HomeBase and Rapid Rehousing
 - COVID Eviction Legal Health Program (CELHP) and Community Mediation Pre-Court
 - Support funding to increase the number of low-income accessible units
 - Continue to support housing voucher programs like AHVP and MRVP and ensure the vouchers are adequate to meet increasing market rents.

Support Regional Transit Authorities (RTA)

- Affordable, accessible and available transportation is a key priority for individuals with disabilities.
- On-demand, accessible transportation to all riders is necessary.
- Support on-demand, accessible transportation pilot program(s), similar to UBER and LYFT MBTA pilot programs.
- Provide funding to RTAs to allow for the continuation of free fare.

MWCIL supports continued funding for Assistive Technology Programs and Durable Medical Equipment

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