

**MetroWest
Center For
Independent Living**

**People with Disabilities
Living in the Community**



MetroWest Legislators and Paul and Joe at the
Legislative Breakfast

The Disability Community is threatened on multiple fronts by the new administration in Washington. The now-confirmed Education Secretary, Betsy DeVos, was confused about Individuals with Disabilities Education Act - it is doubtful that she will enforce IDEA. The new Secretary of Health and Human Services, Tom Price, is an opponent of the ACA, which has allowed many thousands of people with disabilities to have health insurance for pre-existing conditions. The incoming Housing Secretary, Ben Carson, has no experience at a time when countless people continue to be stuck in institutions because of a lack of affordable, accessible housing. The list goes on.

We are lucky to live in Massachusetts, and especially in MetroWest, with elected officials who listen, learn and fund disability needs. Arguably, the need for action right now will be at the federal level. Below, we have included multiple action ideas related to saving the Affordable Care Act. Ongoing, we will continue to include activist resources. Find the issues that affect you the most, and stay vigilant. While marching in Washington is not everyone's cup of tea, we hope you will look through the resources and stay informed, and find a way to make your voice heard.

A shout-out to the Massachusetts Congressional and Senate delegation in Washington. At the January 14 Health Care Rally at Quincy Market (in freezing weather), both Senators Markey and Warren spoke, as well as 7 of our 9 Congress people. They need our help, but we are confident that Massachusetts is well represented with people who care.

Thank you,

Paul Spooner,
Executive Director

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2017 Legislative Breakfast

The annual Legislative Breakfast on February 3, 2017, sponsored by MetroWest Center for Independent Living and Easter Seals of MA, was well attended with Senator Karen Spilka, and Representatives Carolyn Dykema, Jack Lewis, Kate Hogan, David Linsky, Jeff Roy and Chris Walsh. Each legislator spoke of their successes and concerns, with the overriding issue being support from Washington. The MassHealth program, especially, gets large federal contributions. A dramatic change in this funding (Block Grants for example) will make it difficult to maintain health and PCA (Personal Care Attendant) services. We feel confident that our legislators do their best to be proactive and preserve services.



Representatives Jeff Roy and Kate Hogan



Patrick from Easter Seals MA



Tyler and Ed Carr from MWRTA and Representative Carolyn Dykema

***Save the Date for
Independent Living Education Day at the State House***

When:

Wednesday, March 22, 2017 - 11 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Where:

MA State House
Grand Staircase
Boston



David at 2016 IL Ed Day



Crowd claps at 2016 event

Local Job Opportunity at MWRTA

MetroWest Regional Transit Authority has a job opening in their Call Center.

The basics of the job entail:

- Answering the phones in a courteous manner (customer service experience)
- Booking transportation requests (must have computer knowledge)
- Faxing and mailing
- Ability to communicate in an effective manner
- Problem Solving
- Working in a Team Environment

Contact Lisa Long, MWRTA Call Center Manager, at (508)820-4650.

MWRTA
15 Blandin Avenue
Framingham, MA 01702

Device for Analyzing Social Cues

New wearable devices are being developed to help people navigate social cues. MIT's Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory, and Institute of Medical Engineering and Science researchers have combined a smartwatch with audio capture to tell the wearer whether social interactions are positive or negative. The device is not yet ready for prime-time, but is definitely intriguing.

You can read more about these new devices at techtimes.com and wired.com.

Healthcare 2017

The biggest threat to Massachusetts healthcare in 2017 is from the federal government. Governor Baker and Secretary Sudders (Health and Human Services) did not make major changes to the FY 2018 budget, and are committed to retaining important services and safety nets. Last fall, activists were able to convince them of the issues with changing PCA Overtime. While we need to pay attention, Governor Baker has come out against Block Grants and Per Capita reimbursement, and is actively searching for alternative funding for MA residents.

The news from the federal government is another story. ObamaCare i.e the Affordable Care Act is threatened by the Republican Senate, House and President. Their story is that the Affordable Care Act is a disaster, contrary to the views of the estimated 20 million people who are now covered. The dismantling of ObamaCare could follow several paths. The best case is if it is replaced piece by piece with equally effective and affordable options. The worst case is if it is repealed before a replacement is crafted, or if important features are eliminated or reduced.

Women's healthcare care is under attack through the proposed defunding of Planned Parenthood. Many low-income women get their health care at Planned Parenthood. The excuse is that PP performs abortions, but in fact, abortions are not federally funded and instead birth control, cancer screenings and other health care will become inaccessible to many women.

Medicaid (MassHealth) and Medicare are at risk in MA if the federal government switches to Block Grant funding and/or per capita spending. The goal of these two programs is to establish absolute limits on the federal government's spending on Medicaid. Either system will be inadequate to cover MA residents. Please read this article for additional information on these limits: [What would Block Grants or Limits on Per Capita Spending Mean for Medicaid? by the Commonwealth Fund.](#)

The Kaiser Family Foundation (Thanks to DPC Weekly Newsletter for the link) also has an article that helps to explain what the Block Grants and Per Capita spending limits mean: [5 Key Questions: Medicaid Block Grants & Per Capita Caps](#) by Robin Rudowitz.

New Mobility Magazine is also talking about ACA for people with disabilities. Read [What Repealing the Affordable Care Act Means to You](#) from their February 1, 2017 issue.

NCIL Action Alert for the ACA

National Council on Independent Living has an action plan for saving the Affordable Care Act. To see their advice, visit their webpage at <http://www.advocacymonitor.com/>.

While the most important thing is to become educated on this issue (not an easy task!) and talk to your friends and family across the country, this

action alert has other concrete ways you can help.

1. **NCIL is working to collect stories from the IL community that we can use to get Congress to understand how their cuts and changes impact real people around the country.** Have you benefited from the Affordable Care Act? Did you gain coverage through Medicaid expansion? Did you transition from a nursing home to your community because of Money Follows the Person? Will your independence be jeopardized by Medicaid cuts? These are just a few examples of the types of stories we're looking for. We've been told by our allies on the hill that personal stories are what really make the difference. So please, if you have a story to share, email NCIL's Policy Analyst, Lindsay Baran, at lindsay@ncil.org.

2. NCIL is participating in a coalition of disability advocates and activists called Disability Power for Community Integration. The coalition is putting on a webinar this Friday on Congress's efforts to repeal the ACA and restructure Medicaid, and how these will impact people with disabilities. If you're interested in joining, please [register online](#). If you missed the first webinar in January, [view the archived materials](#).

3. If you haven't met with your members of Congress yet (or, even if you have), NOW is the time to get some face-to-face. Both the House and the Senate will be in their home districts all next week (February 18-25), and this will be the perfect time to set up a meeting and voice your concerns! We need our members of Congress to hear directly from their constituents how the action of this Congress will hurt us. And while you're planning your meeting, make sure to check whether your Senators or Representatives have any town halls scheduled on this [calendar compiled by the Town Hall Project](#)!



Take Action on ACA Repeal: Op-Ed Template and Assistance from Steve Gold

Reprinted from [theadvocacymonitor](#), January 25, 2017

If you are concerned about the devastating impact of repealing the Affordable Care Act (ACA), consider writing an Opinion Editorial (Op-Ed) to your local media. Op-Eds will help influence Senators and Representatives to vote against Medicaid Block Grants, cuts to Medicaid, and repeal of the ACA. Please consider submitting your own today!

Steve Gold, a well-known *Olmstead* attorney based in Philadelphia, has published an Op-Ed titled "[Medicaid cuts would endanger disabled and poor seniors](#)" in the Philadelphia Inquirer.

Advocates nationwide are encouraged to use this letter as a [template](#). Mr. Gold's Op-Ed focuses on Pennsylvania, but he has generously offered to help advocates update the data for their respective states. Then, you can further edit the content to express your views or simply sign your name and send it in. Steve Gold can be contacted at stevegoldada1@gmail.com.

Send your letter to your Congressperson and both Senators in Washington. Our MA delegation is on our side, however, personal stories gives them more credibility and ammunition.

Report on the DAAHR Meeting on February 1

Reprinted with edits from the Disability Policy Consortium Newsletter

Over 100 people were at the DAAHR gathering on February 1. The focus of the training was saving the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and preventing drastic cuts to Medicaid by Congress. Attendees heard from Charlie Carr, of the Disability Policy Consortium and Renee Marcus Hodin, of Community Catalyst.

Download the presentation:

[DAAHR Presentation in Powerpoint](#)
[DAAHR Presentation in Microsoft Word](#) or
[DAAHR Presentation as PDF](#)

DAAHR's action steps to save the ACA and Medicaid.

Please join the effort!

Contact:

email [Lenny Somervall](mailto:Lenny.Somervall) or [Maggie Sheets](mailto:Maggie.Sheets)
call 617 542-3822

How YOU Can Help Save the Affordable Care Act and Medicaid!

Call/email/Facebook message people you know in other states. Tell them why the Affordable Care Act is important to you and ask them (beg them!) to make calls to their senators via www.savemycare.org.

Call Massachusetts' leaders:

1. Thank Governor Charlie Baker for telling Congress he supports the ACA and Medicaid! Our message: "Thank you for speaking up to save our health care. We look forward to your continued efforts to keep health care for all in Massachusetts."
2. Thank Senators Warren and Markey for great support of the ACA and Medicaid. Our message: "Thank you so much for taking such a leadership role in protecting health care. The disability community is very thankful for your support. We're depending on you!"

3. Join our Facebook and Twitter Campaign!

Take a photo of yourself holding up a sign that says one of the messages below and post to Facebook or Twitter with #Obamacare #ProtectOurCare.

Because of Obamacare... [fill in your own message]

Without Obamacare I wouldn't be able to... [fill in your own message]
Because of Obamacare, MA has been able to:

Provide more preventative care
Save disabled people an average of \$1,039 in drug costs a year
Provide autistic children with physical, occupational, and speech therapy
Provide disabled people in MA with home and community based services that allow people with disabilities to live independently in their homes with dignity

For Twitter: @CharlieBakerMA @SenMarkey @SenWarren (or your Senator in another state)

On Facebook you can include this message as a caption: If you live in ME, OH, PA, TN, IA, AZ, WV, AK, or NV please call your Senator today. Go to www.savemycare.org.

Special thank you to Shaya French at BCIL for her work preparing much of this information.

[DAAHR](#): Disability Advocates Advancing our Healthcare Rights

CBO Says Eliminating SSI for Children Would Save \$113B in One Decade

"The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has calculated that eliminating [Supplemental Security Income for children with disabilities](#) would save a total of \$113 billion over the next decade. Most of the savings (\$104B) would be in payments, the remaining \$9B would be in administration costs.

The fact that that such a drastic step is even being discussed is very, very troubling."

Thank you to the Disability Policy Consortium weekly newsletter for this information.

Women's March on Washington

Women with disabilities were a presence at the Women's March in Washington. According to one unconfirmed source, at least 45,000 people with disabilities participated. *Colleen Flanagan agreed that there were many, many marchers with disabilities!*

Senator Tammy Duckworth spoke about continuing the fight for the ADA. While we haven't yet seen the ADA as a specific target, presumably it's a matter of time. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8eG4xLNuoY4>



Disability Rights are Human Rights



Activist Resources and Directories

National Contact Information

[Directory of House of Representatives](#)

[Directory of Senators](#)

Senator Edward J. Markey

Address:
255 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

Phone:
(202) 224-2742

Contact:
www.markey.senate.gov/contact

Website:
<http://www.markey.senate.gov/>

Senator Elizabeth Warren

Address:
317 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

Phone:

(202) 224-4543

Contact:

www.warren.senate.gov/?p=email_senator

Website:

<http://www.warren.senate.gov/>

State Government Contact Information

[Directories of State Senators and Representatives](#)

[Contact Governor Baker](#)

[WhereDoIVoteMa.com](#) - Enter your address, and get a list of all of your elected officials.

National Resources

Indivisible - A practical guide for resisting the Trump agenda - Former congressional staffers reveal best practices for making Congress listen. [Download the pdf](#) or [Visit the website](#).

Save My Care - a movement to bring together families, advocates and health care providers to protect the health and financial security of all Americans. [Visit the website](#).

National Council on Independent Living has Action Alerts for issues on the table in Washington. [Visit the Advocacy Monitor webpage](#).

Join REV UP - Make the disability vote count!

For more information, visit www.revupma.org.





MetroWest Center for Independent Living

Website: www.mwcil.org

Email: info@mwcil.org

Phone: (508)875-7853

Address: 280 Irving Street, Framingham, MA 01702

Facebook: 

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info@mwcil.org | www.mwcil.org | [FaceBook](#)

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