House/Senate Conference Committee for FY’19 budget

The next phase of the FY’19 budget debate now turns to the Conference Committee, whose six members include the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the Ways and Means Committee, as well as the ranking minority member of each of the W&M Committees (Senators Spilka, Lovely, and deMacedo and Reps Sanchez, Kulik, and Smola).

The Conference Committee members will reconcile those budget line items where there are differences in wording/funding between the House and the Senate versions of the budget. There are 6 line item recommendations highlighted in yellow in this chart to support either the House or the Senate version of the budget. The aim is to send the Governor a final budget by June 30, 2018, the last day of the fiscal year.

The Conference Committee’s job will be to reconcile the differences between the House budget ($41.065 billion) and the Senate budget ($41.49 billion). The final budget will be voted on by the Senate and House, then sent to the Governor, who has 10 days to review and sign the budget. He also may veto certain items, at which point the budget will be returned to the legislature for any override action.

All are encouraged to reach out to their respective Senators/Representatives asking them to urge the Conference Committee members to support the six budget items that we have identified.

Dental therapist expansion passes through Health Care and Finance

Another priority bill for The Arc of Mass has passed favorably through Health Care Finance Committee! The bill will create a new level of oral care professional, called a Dental Therapist. We are grateful to the bill sponsors - Senator Chandler, Rep. Pignatelli, and Rep. Hogan - for their dedicated efforts on this legislation.

The Arc has been successful in adding language to the bill that will require training in best practices for enhancing oral health for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, including autism. The Arc has also successfully advocated for this newly formed Dental Therapist to have a required MassHealth caseload.

If you want to learn more about this bill, contact Maura Sullivan at sullivan@arcmass.org
Ahhhh, summertime – vacations, swimming, camping, family time, lazy days, and more. Make this your family’s best summer ever, and at the same time, lay the groundwork for a successful school year when September rolls around.

If your child is included in typical, inclusive community activities this summer, not only will she have a wonderful time and make new friends, she’ll also demonstrate that she can be included in “regular” activities. This can be a very important piece of “evidence” at her next IEP meeting! And while your child is having fun, you’ll be creating new friends who can be valuable allies in your efforts to ensure your child is in an inclusive classroom at school!

You may be thinking, “My child can’t participate in ‘normal’ activities – there’s no way all this work will work for us.” But your child can be successful in inclusive community activities! Read on –

Begin by checking out all the organized activities in your community that your child might enjoy, such as the YMCA or Park and Recreation classes/sports; library/museum classes; and Scouts, Campfire, 4-H, etc. Look for activities that will enable your child to be with similar-aged children without disabilities who may be classmates during the next school year.

In addition, put your thinking cap on and consider what activities you could orchestrate: a neighborhood play date every Friday, a field trip to community activities (zoo, park, etc.) once a week, or anything else that will enable you and your child to make new connections in inclusive settings.

As you check our organized activities, learn as much as you can about them ahead of time: ask other parents; observe the activity, if that’s possible; and/or call the sponsor and ask lots of questions (but don’t mention your child’s disability at this point).

While you’re doing this “reconnaissance,” think about what your child will need to be successful: physical or environmental modifications, assistive technology devices, support from other children or an adult leader, and so forth. Your child doesn’t need a one-to-one aide; that person will get in the way of your child making real connections. Instead, teach your child to ask for help from whoever is closest – another child or the adult leader or volunteer. (My articles, “Ask and You Shall Receive” and “When Less is More” might be helpful.)

Next, talk to your child and enthusiastically share what you’ve learned! Describe the activities, share your ideas about supports and modifications he might need, get his input, listen to his concerns, and let him make the final decision about what activities he might want to try. It might even be possible for your child and another family member to participate together. When my then nine-year-old son, Benjamin, took karate classes, his dad took class with him! This class was for all ages, and my husband knew to “back off” and allow Benjamin to make friends, instead of sticking to him like glue!

Next, enroll your child and don’t say one word about his disability at that time. At enrollment time, try to learn more about the activity, the other percipients, and so forth, and then modify, as necessary, your idea of supports, accommodations, etc. A few days before the activity starts, call the leader and, in a positive, helpful manner, describe what you child will need and describe how it can be done. You do not need to disclose your child’s diagnosis (that
As the relationships develop, brag about your child’s gifts (has a great memory, is happy, is trying really hard to talk, collects baseball cards, etc.). After you’ve detailed positive characteristics – and only then – share more about your child’s needs related to his disability, and do this in a way that generates a positive, respectful, and accurate portrayal of your child. Say, “my son needs behavior supports,” instead of, “He has behavior problems.” Say, “My daughter uses a communication device,” instead of, “my daughter is non-verbal.”

As you get to know these new friends, tell them you’d like your child to be included in a regular ed classroom in the neighborhood school with supports and accommodations. At the same time, do not tell all your war stories about education you don’t like! You want to build bridges and create allies, and slamming others (even if they deserve it) doesn’t help! You can, however, share general information about how schools have traditionally undereducated students with disabilities in segregated classrooms, and how harmful this practice has been (like contributing to the 75 percent unemployment rate of people with disabilities). Your new friends will see that since your child is experiencing success in typical summer activities with supports and/or accommodations, he could also be successful in a regular ed classroom with curriculum modifications, supports, and so forth.

As the lazy days of summer pass and your friendships deepen, ask your new allies for help with school inclusion. They may be able to recommend general ed teachers, get you connected to educators who can become allies, and/or use their influence on behalf of your child! They can attend the IEP meeting and provide “testimony” about your child’s inclusion in summer activities.

Resolve to enjoy every precious moment of summer vacation! Have fun as you get your child involved in inclusive community activities, make new friends, and begin a journey that can lead to inclusive education! With the appropriate supports, accommodations, assistive technology, and/or modifications, every child can be successful in inclusive settings – in the community and at school! Success in these settings will put your child on a path to success as an adult – in a job, at college, and for the rest of his life!
In March, 2018, the federal Department of Education amended the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) Case Processing Manual unilaterally and without public notice and comment. The changes include new provisions to mandatorily dismiss certain complaints and the elimination of complainants’ right to appeal OCR decisions.

It is the legal responsibility and stated mission of OCR to ensure equal access to education and to promote educational excellence through vigorous enforcement of civil rights in our nation’s schools.

As part of that mission, OCR is supposed to investigate complaints made under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, Titles VI and IX of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 concerning individual or systemic claims of discrimination.

By opting out of that mission and abdicating its responsibility, OCR is pushing the responsibility for civil rights enforcement onto the shoulders of students and their families and advocates – onto COPAA’s members – who do not have the resources of the federal government at their disposal.\(^\text{-Denise Marshall}\)

Understanding the Guardianship Process in Massachusetts

The Massachusetts General Hospital Lurie Center is offering a series of small-group informational workshops for parents, caregivers and families about Understanding the Guardianship Process in Massachusetts.

All sessions will take place at the MGH Lurie Center (1 Maguire Road, Lexington).

Please Note: These workshops are provided by a parent/professional, are not intended to provide legal assistance or advice, rather they are informational only. Referrals to legal experts are provided as needed.

The first series, Guardianship 101: Learn the Basics of the Guardianship Process, provides an overview of what guardianship is and how it is determined in Massachusetts; the types of guardianships (including limited, Rogers); how to decide if your child needs a guardian and alternatives to consider; a review of how to begin the process and what the Massachusetts probate court requires; the steps you need to follow and a suggested timeline to prepare for your child turning age 18. Guardianship 101 is offered on the first and third Friday of most months, from Noon to 1:00 p.m. The fee: is $20 per person/family.

Registration is required: Please call phone 781-860-1700

The second series, Guardianship 102: Learn the Step-by-Step Process for court required Paperwork, offers a more hand-on group tutorial and will include: where you are in the process and moving forward; a review of relevant checklists for each attendee; guidance with probate court processes and referral to legal resources as needed; guidance on filling out required documentation (petition, bond, citation/giving notice, care plan); and a question and answer session. Guardianship 102 is offered on the second and fourth Thursday of most months from 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The fee is $50 for individual/family for regularly scheduled group time; $100 for individual appointments. You must specify at the time you call.

Registration is required: Please call phone 781-860-1700.

Mass Health Update and Reminder

Remember receiving several letters and notices from January through March regarding the changes to Mass Health? Who can forget, right?

Here’s a gentle reminder, if you are already a Mass Health recipient and you have yet to choose a plan, you have until June 30th to do so.

The Mass Health ACO (Accountable Care Organization) rollout began on March 1. Mass Health members have until June 30 to pick a plan or switch to a new plan. On July 1, members must remain in the plan for one year. For additional information and/or questions call the Autism Insurance Resource Center at 774.455.4056 or visit the new website at www.massairc.org.
**JAY GONZALEZ**

Meet the first-time democratic gubernatorial candidate for the state of Massachusetts, Jay Gonzalez. The 46-year-old Needham resident previously worked as Massachusetts’s administration and finance secretary, overseeing the state’s budget under Gov. Deval Patrick.

Gonzalez overwhelmingly won by 70%, the convention nomination, which took place in Worcester on Saturday, June 2\textsuperscript{nd}. He laid out an aggressive agenda that focused on education, transportation and taxes.

To read more, go to: https://jay4ma.com/jay-gonzalez-wins-democratic-party-nomination-governor/

**GOVERNOR CHARLIE BAKER**

Since his election as the 72nd Governor of Massachusetts in 2014, Charlie Baker has been committed to delivering bipartisan, commonsense, results-oriented leadership that has made the Commonwealth’s economy, communities, schools and families stronger than ever.

Today, the Commonwealth leads the nation in educational achievement, supported by historic investments in public education, local aid, and skill-building to strengthen a highly talented workforce.

For more information on Governor Baker, go to: https://www.charliebakerma.com/about-governor-baker
Massachusetts Advocates for Children

Thank you for sharing your voice! Hundreds of MAC supporters responded to our call to protect MAC’s budget priorities for children. The Massachusetts State Senate released their FY19 budget in early May, and included the following:

- **Full funding** of $600,000 for the **Safe and Supportive Schools** line item, which helps create safe and supportive learning environments for Massachusetts students.
- Full funding of $1.7 million for the Massachusetts Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Initiative, which provides access to higher education for students with intellectual disabilities and/or autism.
- **A provision** establishing a DESE task force to address school district interpreter training and certification to improve **language access** for limited English proficient (LEP) parents.
- **Full funding** of $319 million for the **Special Education Circuit Breaker**, which helps school districts defray the cost of providing legally required special education services and supports.
- **Increased funding** of $21 million for **Civil Legal Aid**, a vital resource for low-income families facing civil legal issues related to education, housing, immigration, disability benefits, and other issues.

The budget now goes to a Conference Committee, which will decide on the final legislative budget. We’ll be in touch soon to ask you to contact your legislators and urge them to maintain full funding for MAC’s priorities in the final budget.

For more information, visit https://massadvocates.org/macs-budget-priorities-for-fiscal-year-2019/

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Gottschall Access Program Expo:
Come Find Out If This College Program Might Be Right For You

Sunday, June 24 at 1 PM - 3 PM
Bristol Community College (Fall River, MA)
777 Elsbree St, Fall River, Massachusetts 02720

The Gottschall Access Program offers adults on the autism spectrum a unique opportunity to enhance their life, vocational and social skills which will enable them to participate in internships, and then eventually the pursuit of gainful employment. Students will enroll in a 3-year program of specially designed courses and have full student access on the college campus.

We will have Program Information: Life Skills, Paralegal Support, Organic Farming, Theatre, Health and Wellness Enrichment classes. Application packets will be available on site to begin the application process. Light Refreshments & Giveaways will also be available.

For questions or to RSVP please contact Kate Dansereau at katedansereau@community-autism-resources.com
**ACTION ALERT**

**Families...Friends...Advocates...Allies...Providers**

**YOUR ACTION & VOICE IS NEEDED TO HELP PROTECT MEDICALLY FRAGILE CHILDREN IN CRISIS**

Parents on the **MA Pediatric Home Nursing Care Campaign** have been working tirelessly over the last two years to get the Legislature to act and begin to address a long-standing crisis and injustice to the Commonwealth’s MOST vulnerable...medically fragile children and adults at home. We’ve made some progress but not nearly enough to protect this population, who continue to be forgotten and misunderstood. With a decade of no increases to reimbursement rates (most importantly nurse wages), it has decimated a homecare workforce. Currently, there are no regulations around annual rate reviews, lack of data collection and tracking mechanisms to understand if the needs of this small and unique group are getting their needs met, and absolutely no accountability measures in place for the state and provider agencies. This is why we need S.1273 to pass and become law!

Right now Senate bill **S.1273** rests in Senate Ways and Means, the final committee, before it goes to the Governor to become law. We need Chairwoman Spilka and her colleagues to to act urgently. **THIS IS OUR LAST CHANCE** this legislative session to make something big happen. We need you to ACT NOW by visiting the link below, filling out your information, and following up with a quick call to your Senators office to ask that they sign-on to an important letter being delivered to Senate Ways and Means at the end of this week. **Current list of co-signers are listed below.**


Senators who’ve already signed-on:

1. Cindy Friedman
2. Michael Rodrigues
3. Julian Cyr
4. William Brownsberger
5. Patrick O’Connor
6. Barbara L’Italien
7. Jason Lewis
8. Jamie Eldridge
9. Paul Feeney

“I used to wonder why someone didn’t do something. Then I realized...I am someone.”

**TOGETHER....WE CAN DO THIS!**

Please share this with your families, members, and larger network. Thank you all!
MASS ADVOCATES STANDING STRONG SOUTHEAST REGION

Meets monthly on every 2nd Thursday
From 6:00 – 7:30 PM
At the Lakeville Library
4 Precinct Street, Lakeville MA 02347
Contact person: Gail Delgado – 339-832-2922

Save the Date!

Self-Advocacy Annual Conference

REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN
20 YEARS STRONG

A celebration you will not want to miss!

Saturday, September 15, 2018
9:00 AM – 4:00 PM (registration opens at 8:00 AM)

DCU Center, Worcester, MA.

The warm weather is fast approaching. Here are some fun and accessible recreational opportunities to boost your summer fun.

Disability.org has done a phenomenal job compiling a list of recreational opportunities for people with disabilities. So if you’re ready for the warm weather and want to enjoy what Massachusetts has to offer, grab a hat, some sunblock and water and hit the accessible venues, including beaches, swimming pools, sailing, playgrounds and trails, accessible restaurants, adaptable sport adventures and more.

For more information, please visit: https://disabilityinfo.org/fact-sheet-library/recreation/recreation-opportunities-for-people-with-disabilities/

Community Autism Resources is excited to present: Gnome Surf Camps Surfing Camp for Individuals with ASD!

Please note the 3 different age groups!

* Tuesday, July 24th - Ages 6-12
  5:30 – 8:30 p.m.

* Wednesday, August 9th - Ages 13-17
  5:30 – 8:30 p.m.

* Saturday, September 8th – Ages 18+
  4:30 – 7:30 p.m.

Surf camp will be held at South Shore Beach
125 South Shore Road
Little Compton, RI 02837

This program will be presented by Gnome Surf. Come join us for a fun night at the beach. Individuals will work their way through 3 activities, including: Arts & Crafts, Surfing and Yoga. We’ll end the night with a s’mores social!!

This event is free but spaces are limited.

Please register at www.community-autism-resources.com under the “Events” section.

Please remember that you are not confirmed to attend until you receive an email notice from us! If you have questions, or cannot register online, please call Lori DeCrescenzo at 508-379-0371 or 800-588-9239 Ext 10.

This event is being generously sponsored by Bearingstar Insurance and the Raymondo Family Charity Event
Join us for an opportunity to learn from public safety (police, fire and medical) personnel what parents need to know that can help both their child with special needs and emergency responders in an emergency situation.

This is an important evening to gain an understanding of the importance of open communication for your child’s sake.

While the intended audience is parents of children with any type of special need, the information shared is important for all parents.

This event is FREE and OPEN to the public.

7th International Conference
“Opening Doors to the Good Things in Life: Implementing Social Role Valorization”
June 6 - 8, 2018
Pre-conference June 4, 5

If you are interested in this event, go to:

Scholarship may be available Louis Nisenbaum Memorial Scholarship Fund. For more information and to download an application, visit:
http://nemasketgroup.org/louis-nisenbaum-memorial-scholarship-fund/

Please visit HighlandStreet.org or call 617.969.8900 for more information.
NEED A LITTLE HELP FROM YOUR FRIENDS?
JOIN US FOR OUR PARENTS OF PEOPLE ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD) SUPPORT GROUP

H.U.G.S GROUP
July 10, 2018 @ 10:30 am
Nemasket Group
109 Fairhaven Road, Mattapoisett, MA 02739

WE’LL HAVE LOTS OF SNACKS, SO BRING YOUR APPETITE!

SPECIAL GUEST: Gail Delgado, Mom and the Metrowest and Southeast Coordinator for Mass Advocates Standing Strong

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**Save the Date**
Monday, August 27, 2018
The Louis Nisenbaum Memorial Golf Tournament to benefit The Nemasket Group

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**Summer Sizzler**
Date: August 16, 2018 (rain or shine)
Time: 5:00 – 7:00 p.m.
Location: Mattapoisett YMCA
38 Reservation Road
Mattapoisett, MA