



MASSACHUSETTS  
SENIOR CARE  
ASSOCIATION

# ***ANSWERING THE CALL TO CARE*** ***2019 Legislative Advocacy Toolkit***





Dear Colleague,

Thank you for your commitment and efforts to protect quality resident care and fund a living wage for our dedicated nursing facility staff. The “2019 Legislative Tool Kit” is designed to assist you in implementing grassroots advocacy within your facility and community. We urge you to work with your community to educate elected officials on the urgent need to close the Medicaid funding gap through the **Answering the Call to Care Campaign**. Our overall success and execution of this multi-pronged grassroots, media and political advocacy campaign is largely dependent upon you, our community of nursing facility leaders, staff, residents and families to be united in making our voices heard!

This Tool Kit is designed to assist you in your advocacy efforts including step-by-step guides on how to contact and communicate with your legislators, tips on hosting a legislative breakfast and tour, media releases and follow up letters. As always, Mass Senior Care will be here to help you every step of the way.

**We are asking each member to take action in 2019 by:**

- Urging Your Community to Join the **Answering the Call to Care Campaign** at [www.MACallToCare.org](http://www.MACallToCare.org)
- Attending State House Meetings with Local Elected Officials
- Hosting a Legislative Breakfast in Your Facility
- Participating in Legislative Action Alerts
- Rallying at State House Advocacy Day on May 21, 2019

Thank you and we look forward to your continued support throughout the year!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matt Salmon".

Matt Salmon  
Chairman

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tara M. Gregorio".

Tara M. Gregorio  
President



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**Mass Senior Care is here to support and guide you. Please contact us at:**

Massachusetts Senior Care Association  
800 South Street, Suite 280  
Waltham, MA 02453  
Telephone: 617-558-0202

**Tara Gregorio**  
President  
Email: [tgregorio@maseniorcare.org](mailto:tgregorio@maseniorcare.org)

**Jennifer Chen**  
Director of Membership Relations & Engagement  
Email: [jchen@maseniorcare.org](mailto:jchen@maseniorcare.org)



## ***Answering the Call to Care Elected Officials In Your District***

**For a list of your local state representative and state senator with their contact information, please contact Massachusetts Senior Care at (617) 558-0202.**

### **Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker**

Office of the Governor  
Massachusetts State House  
24 Beacon St., Room 280  
Boston, MA 02133  
Telephone: (617) 725-4005



## ***Answering the Call to Care: Campaign Overview***

### **2019 Advocacy Campaign Goal:**

Raise our collective voices to urge Governor Baker and the Massachusetts Legislature to invest in quality nursing home care by closing the Medicaid funding gap.

### **Issue Summary:**

Massachusetts nursing facilities provide a core state service to individuals who can no longer live safely in the community. However, the Commonwealth's nursing facilities are facing an unprecedented financial and workforce crisis that requires the urgent attention and action of our lawmakers during the budget setting process. Currently Massachusetts reimbursement rates are based on 2007 costs, which results in Medicaid funding \$38 below the average daily cost of care. This has led to a staggering \$362 million funding gap statewide, or \$900,000 for each facility. With over 77,000 employees caring for 150,000 residents annually, our united voice during the budget process can be an effective one to help close this staggering Medicaid funding gap.

## ***Answering the Call to Care Campaign Talking Points & Fact Sheet***

- ❖ Nursing facilities provide a core state service to older adults and individuals with disabilities who can no longer live safely in the community.
- ❖ A typical long term care resident is female, aged 86, and likely to have dementia or be cognitively impaired. She lived alone prior to entering a nursing facility and is totally dependent on the assistance of CNAs and nurses for her activities of daily living. She relies on MassHealth, the state's Medicaid program, to pay for her care.
- ❖ Approximately 77,000 employees care for 150,000 residents each year across the state.
- ❖ A facility's ability to invest in staff and quality care is dependent upon state funding, since two-thirds of nursing facility residents have their care paid for by MassHealth and 75% of a facility's budget goes to direct care staff wages and benefits.
- ❖ Currently MassHealth reimburses at \$38 below the average daily cost of care, which has led to a \$362 million funding gap statewide, or a \$900,000 loss for each nursing facility annually.
- ❖ Medicaid underfunding has a direct impact on the ability to compete for staff and provide quality resident care. Approximately 5,000 direct care staff positions (14%) are vacant across Massachusetts.
- ❖ The nursing facility sector is operating on negative 1.6% margins with over half of providers operating in the red and having only 7 days of cash on hand. In the past year, 20 nursing facilities have closed.
- ❖ This crisis impacts all nursing facilities – not-for-profit, for profit, family owned - and is directly attributable to a Medicaid payment system that has not kept pace over the last decade. Today, there is a growing and unsustainable Medicaid funding gap – the highest in history and among the worst in the nation.
- ❖ **Closing the Medicaid funding gap in nursing home care is the most significant way to stabilize the workforce, provide a living wage and ensure residents receive quality care.**

## ***Answering the Call to Care: How to Get Involved***



### **Sign up to become an advocate and receive future alerts to contact your elected officials**

Sign up at [www.MACallToCare.org](http://www.MACallToCare.org) to become a Mass Senior Care advocate and stay up to date on action alerts throughout the legislative session.



### **Send a text to your colleagues and friends to participate**

*“Continue to make our voices heard – click [www.MACallToCare.org](http://www.MACallToCare.org) to sign up to become an advocate for quality nursing home care and answer the call to care!”*



### **Visit the State House and meet with your elected officials**

Throughout the legislative session, Mass Senior Care will ask administrators along with members of the facility’s caregiving team to attend and participate in meetings with local legislators. It is critical to continue to educate legislators on the impact Medicaid underfunding has on quality nursing home care.



### **Invite your elected officials to visit your facility**

Show elected officials firsthand the high quality care you provide to residents and patients by hosting a Legislative Breakfast at your facility.



### **Share and spread the word!**

Share the campaign with your community to ensure our voice is heard and funding for quality nursing home care is a priority!



## ***Answering the Call to Care Getting Started***

Educating each legislator is critically important to ensuring investments in quality nursing home care are made in the state budget. It's important to establish and cultivate ongoing relationships with elected officials in your district to help facilitate the education process.

### **Opportunities to Meet With Your Legislators:**

- ❖ Invite him/her to attend a Legislative Breakfast, a Resident's 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday Party or any other celebration at your facility
- ❖ Schedule a meeting at the State House or District Office
- ❖ Attend a community event sponsored by him/her

## ***Tips for Communicating with Your Legislators***

### **They want to hear from you!**

Below, you will find several tips to assist you when meeting, calling or writing your legislators. When communicating with your legislators, it is always helpful to be brief, specific and to illustrate how the issue will affect the citizens who reside or work within the legislator's district. Sample talking points and a fact sheet for communicating with your legislators can be found on page 5. Communication with legislators is mutually beneficial because:

- ❖ You are the expert on long term care issues. Due to their heavy workloads, legislators have to be generalists on a host of issues.
- ❖ Legislators consider how every issue will impact the district. You provide them with this information/knowledge, as both a constituent and a long term care provider.

### **Meeting Your Legislator**

1. Thank your legislator for taking the time to meet with you and be sure to acknowledge and thank your legislator if he/she has been supportive of senior care related issues (such as co-sponsoring MSCA legislation/amendments). MSCA can provide you with this information.
2. State who you are, the organization you represent and introduce others with you by name and affiliation. Discuss your issue/request in an organized manner. It is helpful to provide your legislator with a fact sheet (provided on page 5) and, if applicable, a bill number or budget line item if you are discussing specific legislation. MSCA can provide you with this information.
3. Follow up the meeting with a thank you letter to your legislator and any aides who may have participated in the meeting.



### Calling Your Legislator

1. Ask to speak to your legislator. If he/she is unavailable, ask to speak with the legislative aide who works on health care issues.
2. Identify yourself, where you are calling from and the reason for your call. State your issue/request in an organized manner. Try to be concise and clear about what you are asking for.
3. If possible, keep the call short and thank the legislator or legislative aide for his/her consideration.

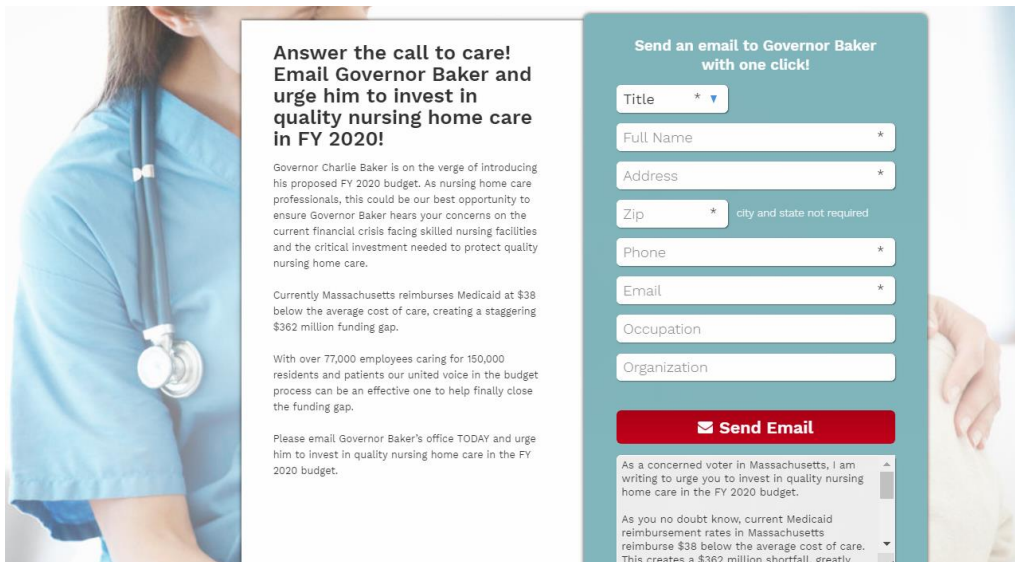
### Writing Your Legislators

Include your name, address and telephone number on the letterhead. Be sure to state the legislation, bill number or budget line item you are writing about. To ensure that the legislator receives the letter, address the letter as follows:

The Honorable [First Name Last Name]  
State House, Room [Room Number]  
Boston, Massachusetts 02133

### Email Your Legislators

Throughout the legislative campaign we will also allow send action alerts with a link that will allow you to easily send emails directly to your elected officials:



**Answer the call to care!  
Email Governor Baker and urge him to invest in quality nursing home care in FY 2020!**

Governor Charlie Baker is on the verge of introducing his proposed FY 2020 budget. As nursing home care professionals, this could be our best opportunity to ensure Governor Baker hears your concerns on the current financial crisis facing skilled nursing facilities and the critical investment needed to protect quality nursing home care.

Currently Massachusetts reimburses Medicaid at \$38 below the average cost of care, creating a staggering \$362 million funding gap.

With over 77,000 employees caring for 150,000 residents and patients our united voice in the budget process can be an effective one to help finally close the funding gap.

Please email Governor Baker's office TODAY and urge him to invest in quality nursing home care in the FY 2020 budget.

**Send an email to Governor Baker with one click!**

Title \* ▾

Full Name \*

Address \*

Zip \* city and state not required

Phone \*

Email \*

Occupation

Organization

**Send Email**

As a concerned voter in Massachusetts, I am writing to urge you to invest in quality nursing home care in the FY 2020 budget.

As you no doubt know, current Medicaid reimbursement rates in Massachusetts reimburse \$38 below the average cost of care. This creates a \$362 million shortfall, greatly

## ***Answering the Call to Care Campaign How to Hosting a Legislative Breakfast or Facility Tour***

As the Legislature debates long term care policy and funding, it is critical that they understand the impact their votes will have on nursing facility residents and quality of care. Events like Legislative Breakfasts or facility tours have proven to be one of the long term care community's best grassroots advocacy tools. Your facility tour will enable policymakers to meet caregivers and residents while seeing firsthand the daily operations of your facility.

### ***Issuing an Invitation***

- ❖ Start by contacting your representative and senator by telephone. You will more than likely work with a legislative aide to schedule the date and time of the event.
- ❖ Briefly explain that you would like to host a Legislative Breakfast at your facility. This is a great opportunity for the legislator to tour your facility and meet with staff, residents or family members to discuss current nursing facility issues.

### ***Planning the Event Step by Step***

- ❖ Set aside at least one hour for the Legislative Breakfast or facility tour.
- ❖ Inform and actively involve staff, residents and their family members in the event by introducing them to the elected official.
- ❖ Prior to the event (typically one week), send a media advisory to local media outlets announcing the event. A sample media advisory is included on page 11 in the toolkit. A well-publicized event can also enhance your visibility in the community.
- ❖ Arrange for some time when you and your senior staff can sit down with the legislator in your office to discuss the need for investments in quality nursing home care in the FY 2020 budget.
- ❖ Plan for the overall event to be conducted by you, the administrator. Assign specific staff like CNAs or nurses to explain their day-to-day tasks and the care they provide to residents. Prepare them so they are comfortable and not surprised by the visitor.
- ❖ Prepare for the legislator your facility's profile including pertinent information on number of residents and employees, the services you provide and the number of Medicaid residents. A sample facility profile is included on page 12 in the toolkit.

### ***Conducting the Tour***

- ❖ Always manage the actual tour yourself.
- ❖ Be sure to make the legislator comfortable. Thank the lawmaker for his/her continued support.
- ❖ Point out as many types of residents or patients as possible and discuss the range of care provided. This will help to give a realistic and well-rounded picture to the lawmaker.
- ❖ Introduce the legislator to the residents, their families and employees you pass as you are touring through the facility. Legislators appreciate the opportunity to shake hands with voters, while learning about nursing facility care.
- ❖ Always end on a positive note and leave the meeting open-ended for further discussions.

### ***Follow Up After the Event***

- ❖ Follow up promptly. Send a "thank you letter" the day after the event, while the details of the tour are fresh in the legislator's mind. A sample thank you letter can be found on page 12 in the toolkit.
- ❖ Send a thank you note to any legislative aide who helped make the visit possible.
- ❖ After the event, send a press release to the local media including a brief write-up and any good photos of the public official, staff, or residents. A sample press release can be found on page 11 in the toolkit.
- ❖ Share the visit and any photos with Mass Senior Care and be sure to post them on your facility's website, newsletter and social media pages.



## Sample Media Advisory

[PUT ON FACILITY LETTERHEAD]

### **For Immediate Release**

Contact: [Name, Title], [Facility's Name], [Phone Number]

What: [Quality Skilled Nursing & Rehabilitation Facility] will host a facility tour for [Representative/Senator] [Last Name] to demonstrate the commitment to quality care for older adults and people with disabilities in our community, and how this reflects on state issues affecting long term care and the resources needed to meet this commitment.

Where: Name of Facility, Address

When: Date of Event, Time

Who: Name of the legislator and any other VIPs who will accompany him or her, as well as senior administrators in the facility who will participate.

Agenda: Briefly describe the tour schedule (e.g., viewing daily operations, meeting residents, lunch, and brief remarks to assembled employees).

## Sample Press Release

[PUT ON FACILITY LETTERHEAD]

### **For Immediate Release**

Contact: [Name, Title], [Facility's Name], [Phone Number]

Include Event Photos

[Quality Skilled Nursing & Rehabilitation Facility] hosted [Senator William Jones and/or State Representative Jill Smith] for a Legislative Breakfast event on [Date]. The Legislative Breakfast event was attended by staff, residents, family members and representatives from skilled nursing facilities in the community to discuss state funding for quality nursing home care.

“There is a crisis among long term care providers as nearly 70% of residents rely on MassHealth to pay for their care. It’s becoming more difficult to retain and recruit the staff we need to provide quality care to older adults and people with disabilities in our community. We need the state to provide investments in quality nursing home care.” said [NAME], Administrator at [FACILITY].



### Sample Nursing Facility Profile

[PUT ON FACILITY LETTERHEAD]

Facility's Name, Address, Telephone Number, Website, Administrator's Name and Email

**Include facility specific information such as:**

- Number of Licensed Nursing Facility Beds
- Number of Residents Care For Annually
- Resident Services: Dementia Special Care Unit, Hospice Care, Short-Term Rehabilitation, Transportation Services
- Number/Percentage of Residents Relying on Medicaid
- Number of Employees

### Sample Tour Thank You Letter

[PUT ON FACILITY LETTERHEAD]

[March 24, 2019]  
Honorable [William Jones]  
State House, Room [435]  
Boston, MA 02133

Dear [Representative/Senator] [Last Name],

On behalf of the residents and staff of the [Quality Skilled Nursing & Rehabilitation Facility], I want to thank you for making time in your very busy schedule to visit with us on [March 23<sup>rd</sup>]. Everyone here greatly enjoyed meeting you and each of us was gratified by your commitment to issues affecting the quality and future of long term care in our community and our state. I look forward to further discussing how critical it is to our profession that proper investments in quality nursing home care are made in the FY 2020 budget.

I look forward to speaking with you again soon. If I can be of any assistance, in particular when technically complex issues involving long term care are before you, please call on me any time.

Sincerely yours,  
[NAME]  
Administrator



## ***Answering the Call to Care Campaign Community and Media Engagement***

Advocacy does not start and stop with your legislators, you must also take the time on behalf of your facility and your residents to reach out to your community and your local media outlets. It's important to be proactive and showcase the important services your facility provides, promote a positive image of our profession, and provide the correct facts about long term care.

### **Ways to Reach Out to Your Community**

- Respond to newspaper articles by writing a Letter to the Editor
- Write your own Op-Ed
- Participate in local radio or television programming

**For assistance with media outreach, please contact Gray Media, Mass Senior Care's media consultant.**

Kate Kahn  
Gray Media Group  
Email: [kahn@graymediagroup.com](mailto:kahn@graymediagroup.com)  
Telephone: 617-513-8849



## ***Answering the Call to Care Campaign FY 2020 Budget Calendar***

### **January 2019 – July 2019**

<b>January 7-11, 2019</b>	Email Messages to Governor Charlie Baker's Office
<b>January 14-18, 2019</b>	Calls to Governor Charlie Baker's Office
<b>January 23, 2019</b>	Governor Baker State Fiscal Year 2020 Budget Recommendation Released
<b>January 21-31, 2019</b>	Efforts to Gain Legislative Co-Sponsor for Nursing Home Stabilization and Quality Jobs Initiative Legislation
<b>February-March 2019</b>	Legislative Meetings at State House and In District
<b>April 10, 2019</b>	House Ways & Means Fiscal Year 2020 Budget Recommendation Released
<b>April 24, 2019</b>	FY 2020 Budget Debated by the Full House of Representatives
<b>April - May 2019</b>	Legislative Meetings at State House and In District
<b>May 8, 2019</b>	Senate Ways & Means Fiscal Year 2020 Budget Recommendation Released
<b>May 21, 2019</b>	<b>STATE HOUSE ADVOCACY DAY RALLY</b>
<b>May 22, 2019</b>	FY 2020 Budget Debated by the Full Senate
<b>June 2019</b>	Fiscal Year 2020 Conference Committee Deliberations
<b>July 1, 2019</b>	Start of State Fiscal Year 2020