

MARCH 5, 2024

ASSISTED LIVING ADVOCACY DAY

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THE MASSACHUSETTS ASSISTED LIVING ASSOCIATION

ADVOCATING FOR DIGNITY AND CHOICE FOR OLDER ADULTS

1. INFORM Your Legislator About Assisted Living: Assisted living emphasizes aging with dignity and choice while offering a high-quality lifestyle in a supportive, homelike environment. Residents transitioning from living independently often choose assisted living for a variety of reasons. Most residents (78%) receive support with certain activities of basic daily living, such as bathing, dressing, grooming, or mobility*. There are 267 certified assisted living residences in MA with more than 16,000 residents, and the median age is between 85-89. Over 7,000 have been diagnosed with an Alzheimer's disease and related dementias*. Some of these individuals live in special memory care units that support those living with Alzheimer's disease or other dementias.

In assisted living, every older adult, regardless of their needs or abilities, can thrive in a supportive community atmosphere. With loneliness on the rise among older adults, assisted living supports residents in staying active, developing new hobbies, and making new friends. Assisted living is rooted in the value that seniors – even in very old age or with severe memory impairment -- shouldn't be defined by their medical needs.

Assisted living promotes wellness by supporting residents with daily hygiene, managing medications, eating healthy and regular meals, keeping a consistent sleep schedule, and staying physically active. Staff develop an individualized assessment and service plan for each resident, revised over time as needs change.

**Source 2022 EOEI Annual Aggregate Data Report*

2. Ask Your Legislator to AMEND: SB 2527 (Sen. Jehlen/ Rep. Stanley/ Rep Pignatelli) An Act relative to assisted living and basic health services [Currently in the Committee on Health Care Financing]

Overview: We support allowing nurses in assisted living to provide basic health services, and for income-eligible residents to reside in assisted living under the Frail Elder Waiver if it meets their needs. This bill would permanently allow the health services and would require the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) to report to the legislature on expanding the Frail Elder Waiver to assisted living. Ask your legislator to **AMEND** this bill to allow for these two positive changes to be made without attaching too many restrictions.

The changes we are seeking are:

- Allow each assisted living residence to select which services they can offer given their staffing structure at each community.
- Add clarity and structure to Section 8 surrounding EOEA's ability to levy fines on residences.
- Align Section 12 on whistleblower protections for employees with existing Massachusetts law.

Details: SB 2527 would give assisted living residences the option of offering certain basic health services (injections, dressing changes, oxygen management, application of drops and ointments) to serve residents with limited health needs that might otherwise cause them to prematurely enter skilled nursing facilities.

It also requires that EOHHS study and report to the legislature on the availability and cost of utilizing the Frail Elder Waiver in assisted living, which would expand access to affordable assisted living across the state. More than 40 states allow older adults to have the option to utilize the Frail Elder Waiver to reside in assisted living.

3. Ask Your Legislator to SUPPORT: Extending the health services, staffing, and training flexibilities that are currently set to expire on March 31.

Overview: Residents in assisted living are currently receiving health services such as insulin injections and oxygen management thanks to several short-term extensions of the COVID executive order allowing it. There are also staffing and training flexibilities that have helped to ensure resident care is delivered during the current staffing crisis. Ask your legislator to support extending this provision by attaching an extension to legislation prior to the March 31 end date.

Details: While SB 2527, which would permanently allow for a set of basic health services to be provided in assisted living, continues through the legislative process, we need an extension of this Order to avoid interruptions to resident and family care plans. These services have been safely and very successfully provided by assisted living nurses since April 2020 and many residents have come to rely on the provision of this care by their own nurses.

ABOUT MASS-ALA

The Massachusetts Assisted Living Association (Mass-ALA) is a not-for-profit association, dedicated to professionally operated assisted living residences in Massachusetts that provide housing and services for individuals with varied needs and income levels.

Mass-ALA serves as the voice of assisted living in Massachusetts, providing information and education, and advocating on behalf of our members and the seniors they serve. Mass-ALA promotes a model of care which treats all residents with dignity, provides privacy, and encourages independence and freedom of choice.



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