



Mass Home Care



Press Release: For Immediate Release

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**Joint Statement from Mass Home Care and the Home Care Aide Council in Response to:
“Stranger in the House” series printed in the Boston Globe on September 16, 2018 and
September 17, 2018**

For over 40 years, Mass Home Care and the Home Care Aide Council have been committed to ensuring that safe, high quality, and compassionate care is provided to elders and disabled adults throughout our Commonwealth. This week, the Boston Globe published a two-part series about the Massachusetts home care system and, in particular, the home care aide workforce. While both pieces brought attention to the imperative supports and services our network provides, they painted the entire industry with a broad brush, casting an extremely confusing and frightening picture of both the industry and the close to 100,000 home care aides providing care to individuals each and every day.

The first article gives the perception that on a regular basis, home care workers victimize their clients when in reality those situations, while very disturbing, are extremely rare. As the second article notes, the overwhelming majority of these workers are extremely dedicated to their clients. In fact, last year, home care aides provided over 6 million hours of home care services to over 50,000 elders through the state’s home care program. These essential services enable these consumers to remain in their communities and function as the eyes and ears of the health care system in the home.

The Globe missed an opportunity to balance their reporting by providing critical information on the current oversight, protections, safeguards, and standards which do exist to both protect consumers from abuse and enhance quality of care. Here are some clear and compelling facts about our home care system and workforce that should have been included in these articles:

- Massachusetts was one of the first states in the nation to establish a statewide home care program. This program, managed through the Commonwealth’s network of 26 non-profit Aging Services Access Points (ASAPs), is designed to provide information and services to consumers and their families regardless of their income.
- The Executive Office of Elder Affairs and the Executive Office of Health and Human Services have worked with stakeholders to establish contract requirements for state and federally funded home care services and the ASAPs conduct audits to ensure compliance. These requirements include:
 - Background and CORI checks
 - Department of Public Health (DPH) Patient Abuse Registry and Disabled Persons Protective Commission (DPPC) checks
 - Federal Medicaid fraud checks
 - Health Screenings including physicals and TB testing

- Initial training (between 60 and 75 hours) and annual in-service training
- Mandatory job orientation
- Nursing supervision
- Since 2015, Massachusetts has engaged in a comprehensive initiative to update and strengthen its Elder Abuse Protective Services program.
 - Last year, the Executive Office of Elder Affairs launched a new centralized intake hotline and reporting system for the program making it easier than ever for consumers and their families to make reports.
 - In every year since 2015, the Administration and the Legislature have increased their funding for this critical program.
- The Massachusetts Legislature took action this session to pass a number of bills establishing enhanced training for home care aides employed by home care agencies that contract through the state home care program including:
 - Passage of the Massachusetts Alzheimer's and Dementia Act and the,
 - First in the nation, LGBT cultural competency training for elder care workers.
 - Additionally, \$9.4 million was set aside to establish a new a Home Care Workforce Training Initiative in the recently passed Economic Bond Bill. Our organizations are now working with state leaders to fund this program in FY20.
- During the last session, the Legislature considered three bills to establish licensing requirements for the home care industry. Our organizations continue to push for comprehensive regulations to ensure quality within the private pay market.

We agree with the Globe - the experience of navigating the private pay home care market can be a confusing and overwhelming experience for most families. But resources are available to assist families through their local ASAP, the Home Care Aide Council, and other aging services organizations. We also strongly advocate for the expansion of the existing best practice standards and quality assurance requirements that exist within our publicly funded home care system into our unregulated private pay marketplace.

It is extremely important for consumers and families to recognize that the gray market, like online job postings or word of mouth, are always risky - a "buyer beware" industry. Purchasing care for your loved ones from a qualified home care agency may be more expensive than accessing care through the underground but these added costs result in greater quality, support, and protections for both the consumer and the worker. The Globe did a disservice by not clearly differentiating between these unregulated markets and the services provided by agencies that contract with the state home care program.

Most importantly, the author neglected to tell the real story, the true crisis we face in our state, and our nation, as our population ages and individuals are living longer with more community-based care needs: the massive shortage of these critical workers, resulting in vulnerable elders going without needed care, and the fact that the workers who are providing this care are struggling to make ends meet.

Mass Home Care and the Council have repeatedly advocated for more state funding and resources to address the shortage and ensure a living wage for the dedicated home care aide workforce. We have, and will continue to work with our Legislators and the Administration, to

expand the existing standards and funding to enhance the care provided to consumers in their own homes and support the home care workers who dedicate their careers to provide direct care services to our most vulnerable community members.

About Mass Home Care:

The mission of Mass Home Care is to assist our 29 member agencies fulfill their roles under Title III of the Older Americans Act and as the state designated Aging Services Access Points (ASAPs). Mass Home Care works to foster the development of a comprehensive and coordinated service systems that enable individuals live at their highest level of functioning possible, in the least restrictive setting possible, for as long as possible. Find out how to contact the ASAP in your area by visiting our website: www.masshomecare.org

About the Home Care Aide Council:

The Home Care Aide Council (Council) is a non-profit trade association with over 120 home care agency and community-based organization members throughout Massachusetts. The Home Care Aide Foundation, our 501 c 3 arm, implements best practice initiatives and evidence-based training curricula supported through grant funding and donations. Together, our Council and Foundation are committed to enhancing quality of care throughout the home care industry by focusing on the advancement of the home care aide workforce. More information on the home care agencies and the home care aide workforce can found at www.hcacouncil.org