



REAL LIVES BILL

Fact Sheet

H.B. 151: An Act to Ensure Responsibility, Cost Effectiveness and Meaningful Lives for Individuals with Disabilities

Lead Sponsor: Representative Tom Sannicandro

House Bill 151, also known as the “Real Lives” bill, will improve the delivery of support services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their family members. This will be accomplished by creating a system that is flexible, transparent and gives choice and control of supports to individuals and their family member caregivers.

This bill has gone through extensive re-working since originally filed in order to obtain wide support. The revised bill is now supported by the Department of Developmental Services and the Association of Developmental Disabilities Providers. The Real Lives Bill proposes system change in the way developmental services are financed and delivered. Individuals will be able to determine how to spend their allocated dollars on services and supports they need including but not limited to assistive technology, modifications, therapies, and professional, residential and employment services and supports.

Individual Supports Plans (ISPs) and Plans of Care (POCs) will be designed around four self-determination domains:

1. A place to call home
2. Economic self-sufficiency through supports
3. Support for existing or new long-term relationships
4. Real community memberships

Mass. Alliance for 21st Century Disability Policy Supporting Members: The Arc of Massachusetts * Massachusetts Families Organizing for Change * Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council * Massachusetts Advocates Standing Strong * Advocates for Autism of Massachusetts * Disability Law Center * Massachusetts Down Syndrome Congress * The Federation for Children with Special Needs * The Massachusetts Sibling Support Network

Fiscal intermediaries and support brokers will be available to assist individuals. The bill includes language that allows individuals who are in group based residential, day or employment service to leave a particular setting or provider in a timely way. This addresses the sometimes long delays that individuals experience when not happy or satisfied in a certain setting.

Why is this bill needed?

In Massachusetts, thousands of individuals with disabilities and family caregivers lack the critical support they need to function successfully in their daily lives. Decades of no cost of living increases and cost pressures on service providers have resulted in minimizing consumer choice within the existing service delivery structure. It is important to find ways to safeguard some level of choice for individuals given that housing supports or employment options will make up a significant part of their lives.

Often an individual's placement in a program or residence is based on what is currently available in the system, and not what is best or even most cost effective for the individual. The existing system will experience a higher demand with limited resources. Examples include:

- Individuals with developmental disabilities living with elderly caregiver parents
- Adults with developmental disabilities with complex medical needs.
- An exploding population of children on the autism spectrum
- Young adults turning 22 years old receiving no assistance after transitioning out of their special education programs
- Individuals wishing to leave an existing program sometimes must wait several months to pursue an alternative option

This bill is responsive to these emerging trends.

Cost Implications

- H.B. 151 requires no new funding except for modest transition funds. It directs the Executive Office of Health and Human Services to implement the program using available federal funding streams.
- The new system will provide fiscal incentives for individuals and families in return for maximum flexibility in planning and budgeting.

Ultimately, "An Act to Ensure Responsibility, Cost Effectiveness and Meaningful Lives for Individuals with Disabilities" will create systemic change by providing cost effective, flexible supports for individuals with disabilities to lead full and productive lives in their communities, and for families to remain together.

For more information, contact timetospeakout@mdsc.org or 781-221-0024.

House Bill 151 was previously H.B. 4167.

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