

Massachusetts Coalition for Addiction Services

~ Saving Lives, Saving Dollars ~

MCAS FY2025 State Budget Conference Committee Requests Line Item 4512-0200 DPH/Bureau of Substance Addiction Services

The *Massachusetts Coalition for Addiction Services* (MCAS) brings together a group of organizations that advocate for investments in harm reduction, treatment, prevention, and recovery support services for people with substance use disorders. The coalition focuses solely on the Bureau of Substance Addiction Services operational budget (Line Item 4512-0200).

The June 2024 Department of Public Health (DPH) Data Brief reported Massachusetts opioid-related overdose deaths decreased by 10% in 2023. DPH data indicated that there were approximately 2,125 confirmed and estimated opioid-related overdose deaths in 2023, 232 fewer than in 2022. While we might be heartened by a 10% reduction, that encouragement is tempered by the fact the rate is still higher than record levels set in 2016. We cannot ignore fatality rates are highest for Indigenous people and increased for Black people during this same period. To recognize and respond to the urgency of this crisis, MCAS recommendations focus on interventions to decrease overdoses, support the substance use treatment workforce, and increase access to care that is culturally, ethnically, and linguistically competent.

We thank both the House and Senate for supporting the full continuum of care to address this crisis. We do want to share preferences between House and Senate language that might enhance the path to saving lives.

For the FY25 budget, MCAS respectfully requested that conferees consider adoption of the following substance use service requests.

SENATE Language

- **\$1 million for BSAS workforce development assistance** to support staff who work in BSAS- licensed programs (substance use treatment safety net) for purposes including, but not limited to, financial support to complete trainings and continuing education curriculum. The program should prioritize recruitment and retention of a culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse workforce.
- **\$1M for Contingency Management**, an evidence-informed behavioral therapy for stimulant use disorder that focuses on positively reinforcing desired behaviors, such as cessation or reduction of stimulant use and engagement in treatment through rewards like prizes, money, and privileges. Research backs this method of therapy for which there is no known medication.

In its final report, the Methamphetamine Use Commission supported expanded access to contingency management as a strategy to expand and improve access to treatment. Specifically, the Commission recommended:

“The Commonwealth should increase access to behavioral interventions for treatment for stimulant use disorder, including evidence-based, effective approaches such as tailored cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), Contingency Management, exercise, residential rehabilitation-based therapies, and matrix model intervention

- **\$3 million for the Massachusetts Access to Recovery (MA-ATR) program.** MA-ATR offers comprehensive care coordination, job readiness, skills, training, and access to services for individuals who are re-entering the community post-incarceration, pregnant women, and veterans. The program saves the state money in healthcare, incarceration, and social costs through the empowerment of individuals and served over 26,000 individuals. It is a phenomenal program where people are now approaching 8 or more years of recovery and living a full life. The House, also, supported this measure, but did not include the necessary \$3 million in the line-item total.
- **\$750,000 to expand transportation programs** for individuals accessing substance use treatment services, to decrease barriers to care. Every survey from across the state emphasizes this need. It is next to heartbreaking to agree to access treatment, but there is no transportation access!

HOUSE Language

- **\$1 million for the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) for people in recovery.** BSAS employs an Interagency Service Agreement with MRC to approach workforce development and strategic planning with a wide range of stakeholders to identify educational pathways with local community colleges and universities to train individuals with lived experience to work in the substance use treatment field. This measure supports people in recovery without means to find a pathway of educational and career support.
- **\$2 million to address the addiction treatment workforce crisis** through outreach and recruitment efforts at regional educational institutions and vocational-technical high schools. This funding provides the process to do recruitment while older adolescents are making career plans.

Thank You House and Senate for Including

- **\$10 million for low threshold housing for homeless individuals with substance use and co-occurring disorders at risk of HIV.** This funding would enable BSAS to continue to procure congregate care or individual housing units that do not require sobriety for placement and provide supervised case management services. The goal of this model is to reduce homelessness, improve health outcomes, and advance health equity. In FY24, this funding was used to procure 538 units of housing across the Commonwealth.

MCAS further hopes a supplemental budget will approve 2024 funding appropriated to Line Item 4512- 0200 that was not procured and/or expended be continued in FY25 budget allowing for additional time for critical services implementation.

With Gratitude, MCAS Members include:

Association for Behavioral Healthcare (ABH)
The Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC)
EndHepC MA Coalition
Fenway Health
Learn to Cope

Massachusetts Association of Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Counselors (MAADAC)

Massachusetts Black Alcohol & Addiction Counselors Council (MBAC)

Massachusetts Housing & Shelter Alliance (MHSA)

Massachusetts Organization for Addiction Recovery (MOAR)

Massachusetts Public Health Association

Recovery Homes Collaborative of Massachusetts (RHC)

RIZE Massachusetts

Student Coalition on Addiction (SCA)

Western Massachusetts Substance Addiction Providers Association (WMSAPA)

Questions; Please contact Maryanne Frangules on behalf of MCAS at maryanne@moar-recovery.org