On June 20th, a crowd of legislative aides and staffers gathered in the Statehouse to listen to the personal experiences and policy recommendations of Massachusetts seniors and senior advocates. This event marked the official public kickoff of the Coalition for Elder Economic Security (CEES), a new collaborative effort of organizations fighting for policy changes to protect seniors in Massachusetts, including Mass Senior Action, AARP, Mass Councils on Aging, SEIU1199, LeadingAge MA, and over a dozen more.

This coalition united after the publication of a UMass report which showed that 6 out of 10 elders living alone in Massachusetts do not have enough income to cover the basic needs of housing, healthcare, and food. As the cost of healthcare increases, this crisis is only getting more urgent. Many states have already put measures in place to lessen the burden of healthcare expenses for seniors - in fact, according to the “Elder Economic Index” established by this UMass report, the only state with a higher percentage of seniors struggling is Mississippi. And so CEES came together to tackle these disparities by working with legislators on measures that would support economic security for seniors.

One policy CEES is pushing is the “SNAP Gap Common App,” a single, streamlined application process for MassHealth and SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - food stamps), in order to facilitate support for the 680,000 Massachusetts residents who are on MassHealth and are eligible for SNAP but aren’t currently receiving those benefits. As it stands, the application for MassHealth alone is 26 pages long, and the SNAP app asks for much of the same information. This is more work not only for government workers but also for Mass residents, and it discourages people from seeking out the support they are eligible for.

CEES is also helping to push forward Mass Senior Action’s “Bridge the Gap” health care bills, presenting to legislators a united force pushing senior health care to be a priority in the Statehouse.

The kickoff event was successful in putting our new Coalition loudly on the map. In attendance were aides from

Continued on page 4
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM

Enclosed are membership dues for:

☐ $10 1-year individual  ☐ $15 1-year couple  ☐ $50 individual lifetime  ☐ $75 couple lifetime

NAME(s): ________________________________________________________________

ADDRESS: ___________________________________________________________________ APT #: ______

CITY: __________________________ STATE: ___________ ZIP: ___________

PHONE: __________________________ EMAIL: __________________________

Make checks payable to: MSAC
Mail to: Mass Senior Action, 108 Myrtle St., Suite 112, Quincy, MA 02171
Greetings to all:

I hope this finds you well and enjoying your summer. I know many of you have been hard at work on our issues and I want to thank you for building senior power.

I personally have been a member for over 10 years now and have been your President for 2 terms. From the first meeting I attended, I knew MSAC was a vital organization and I needed to join in the action.

Over the past few months it has been difficult for me to participate as much as I’d like because my husband is suffering with medical issues. He needs me to care for him right now, but know my heart has been with those of you on the front line fighting for social justice.

You see, you have proven to me how important participation is. It was participation by MSAC members that stopped a tax on Medicare prescriptions in 1981. It was the participation of MSAC members that saved expiring use housing. It was your participation that stopped huge increases to transportation. It was your participation that made home care a choice, and it was your participation that stopped the privatization of social security.

Sometimes, I stop and I shudder to think what our community would be without Mass Senior Action. I know as we watch the news and hear the proposals by some of our elected representatives, it is difficult to stay in the fight. But I say to you, your participation is important now more than ever.

Far too often today, we as seniors are viewed as burdens – a drain on resources and in need of care. But we are not a burden – we are of great value to our families and our communities. It’s time for us to reclaim our place, to remind decision makers that we are a force and we will not be brushed to the side.

I know that it will not always be easy, that sometimes it may feel that the hill is too steep to reach the top, but let me assure you that if we continue to work together, if we continue to fight for justice, we will win, we will make things better for ourselves, our children and the many generations to come. People power will win against greed.

I look forward to seeing all of you at the October 11 convention. We will unite and continue to build the senior movement.

We will not just take it, We will take Charge!

Support MSAC!
Donate at:
www.MassSeniorAction.org

**MISSION:** As a democratic, grassroots, senior-run organization, Mass Senior Action is committed to empowering seniors and others to act collectively to promote the rights and well-being of all people, but particularly vulnerable seniors.
20+ offices as well as Senator L’Italien and Representative Gregoire (the co-chairs of Elder Affairs), Representative McGonagle of Everett, many folks from partner organizations, and a reporter from the Boston Herald. Three members of Mass Senior Action powerfully shared their health care stories with the audience, grounding the policy proposals in the concrete effects they would have on seniors across the Commonwealth.

Following these powerful stories, staff advocates from Mass Law Reform, Mass Councils on Aging, and Mass Senior Action gave details on the three key areas of legislation that CEES is pushing: the SNAP Gap Bill, “Bridge the Gap” Healthcare, and a tax reform measure that would help protect seniors against isolation in rural homes and change property tax deferral rules to make it more accessible to economically insecure seniors and their families.

All in all, it was a powerful morning that sent the message to state legislators that there is a strong, united force that will not be silent when it comes to elder economic security in Massachusetts.

So what’s next for CEES? Well, it’s not slowing down here. The SNAP Gap Common App actually made it as a line item in the budget proposed by the Mass Legislature’s Conference Committee this July. While this change is quickly moving toward becoming reality, there is still much to be done to ensure economic security for seniors. Coalition members will be meeting with legislators in the coming months, preparing them to be our champions when it comes time to support the proposed bills. So legislators, get ready to hear from passionate elders who are taking charge of their right to affordable health care and economic security! And if you are interested in speaking with your representatives or telling your story in the context of this effort, come join us - there’s a place in this fight waiting just for you.
VOTER TURNOUT INCREASES WITH BILINGUAL BALLOT

Over the past year, Mass Senior Action has been part of a statewide coalition called Asian Pacific Islander Community Action Network. This coalition is made up of organizations from across the state who want to encourage Asian Americans to get involved with local politics.

One of the challenges that faces Asian Americans who do not speak English is the lack of translation services in local government and on the ballots. Across the state, many registered voters primarily speak a language that is not English. Particularly in Malden, Mass Senior Action has been reaching out to new citizens to activate in the voting process.

Local counties are required by federal law to provide multiple languages on the ballot if the language minority population in that area goes above 5% of the voting-age population (or over 10,000 citizens). As many towns and cities across Massachusetts are becoming more diverse, they are faced with figuring out how to put this federal mandate into practice. Some cities across the commonwealth have had multilingual ballots for a few election cycles already, and have not only seen increased voter participation, but have also noticed that it helps ensure that voters are voting for the candidate of their choice and voting for their best interest on ballot questions.

One of the most recent cities to hit the mark requiring a bilingual ballot is Malden. Over the past three years, the number of Chinese voters has increased. MSAC Metro North Chapter reached out to these new citizens with our “Get Out The Vote” campaign by providing the tools needed to participate in the election process.

Mass Senior Action members hosted regular workshops leading up to the elections to educate new voters about ballot questions and to introduce the candidates running for office. “We are American citizens and studied very hard to pass the citizenship test. We take our right to vote seriously and with great pride,” said Mr. Tu at one of the forty workshops Metro North chapters conducted. One obstacle standing in the way of participation is the ballot - while the law states the ballot must be translated, it does not require the local election clerk to translate the candidate’s names. Without full translation, it is a challenge to ensure the voter is voting for the candidate they choose.

MSAC Leader, Peter Huang, explained why the total ballot translation is important, “The Bilingual ballot is very exciting news and should motivate more voters to vote. However, without the Chinese names on the ballot, it is still a road block for us to be able to know if we are actually voting for the candidate we feel will do the best job for the community.”

Metro North chapter leaders met with Malden Mayor Gary Christenson and Malden City Clerk Tom Brennan to discuss the possibility and challenges of including the candidates’ names when translating the ballot. Both the Mayor and the Clerk are supportive, and MSAC will keep working with the City to make the ballot truly bilingual.

Mass Senior Action is hopeful that by working together, Malden can be an inclusive and open place for all citizens!
2017 marked the 36th year of senior action, and on June 29th over 200 Mass Senior Action members along with their supporters came in from across the state to celebrate. MSAC Statewide President Barbara Mann opened the ceremony by welcoming everyone, saying, “It’s amazing to look out across the room and see it full with hundreds of social justice warriors. I am proud to stand with you.”

President Mann looked back on this year’s accomplishments, “MSAC is proof that participation does matter;” she said. “36 years ago, a group of retirees organized to ensure that the senior voice is heard. Today, we celebrate those who went before us and recommit to their mission to build the senior voice and never stop fighting for justice in our communities and our country.”

President Mann then introduced the Unsung Heroes nominated by their chapters. “These members are the ‘unsung heroes’ of our organization,” Mann said as she presented the awards. “They are ordinary people doing extraordinary things. The people who keep us going, dedicated to building our voice and improving the lives of all seniors!”

After the Unsung Heroes were honored, chapters displayed their different abilities in a fun “Whose Got Talent” competition. Boston and Bristol County members shared poetry and recited lyrics (see pg. 8 for member Lillian O’Neal’s warm feelings of MSAC), while North Shore and Cambridge Chapters led the group in song and a dance. Springfield Chapter ended the show with everyone on their feet in a unique rendition of the electric slide calling on us all to activate for the fight ahead.

MSAC Executive Director Carolyn Villers thanked each of our sponsors whose support helps to make MSAC’s work successful, “Your support keeps buses rolling to the State House to help bridge the health care gap, rides to the MBTA Board meetings to fight inequitable fare proposals, and dedicated staff to ensure members have the tools they need to be leaders in their community,” said Villers.

MSAC members and staff join Executive Director Villers in giving a huge thank you to the supporters listed on the next page. We depend on their generosity to continue our fight for social justice.

The event ended with lively music and a full dance floor as members from the different chapters danced together, celebrating their unity and their excitement for the journey ahead.
We gratefully acknowledge the following individuals and organizations for their generous support:

**Power Builder**
1199SEIU  
Blue Cross Blue Shield of MA  

**Partner**
AARP of Massachusetts  
The Boston Housing Authority  
Partners Healthcare  
Rogerson Communities  

**Activist**
Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center  
Boston Carmen’s Union - ATU Local 589  
Boston Medical Center - Health Net  
Commonwealth Care Alliance  
Eastern Bank  
Geoff Wilkinson & Sally Johnson  
Massachusetts Association of Councils on Aging  
Massachusetts Nurses Association  

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Lynn Housing Authority & Neighborhood Development  
MSAC Boston Chapter  
MSAC North Shore Chapter  
MSAC Metro North Chapter  
MSAC Springfield Chapter  
Old Colony Elder Services  
Patrick Ryan  
Phil Mamber  
Pioneer Valley Labor Council, AFL-CIO  
Tillyruth Teixeira  
United Food and Commercial Workers, Local 1459  

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Community Labor United  
Lynn City Councilor Brian LaPierre  
Lynn City Councilor Dianna Chakoutis  
IUE-CWA Local 201 Retirees  
Jim Wessler & Susan Goodman  
Joan Pingley  
Mass Alliance for Retired Americans  

**Massachusetts Jobs With Justice**  
Mass Peace Action  
Mayor Denise Simmons, Cambridge  
Mayor Gary Christenson, Malden  
MSAC Bristol Chapter  
MSAC Cambridge Chapter  
MSAC North Seacoast Affiliate  
North Shore Labor Council  
Rep. Brendan Crighton  
Rep. Dan Cahill  
Rep. Mike Connolly  
Rep. Daniel Cullinane  
Rep. Steve Ultrino  
Senator Sal DiDomenico  

MSAC North Shore member, Shirley Hidden, received the “Senior Super Hero” award for her outstanding raffle sales and support of MSAC’s work.
Yes - we come by the numbers for we are on a mission -- and we take charge!
We walk -- we sit -- we ride by the numbers --
We take to the streets -- to halls -- to buildings -- for there’s no stopping us now!
We will block streets -- we will sit behind bars --
We blocked Stuart St., roll back the ride -- Wilhelmina saw more than we did --
Police came to talk us down -- and they talked and talked --
We watched two big strong policemen take Ann -- away --

United we sat -- as the blue shirts met the blue shirts -- they did not change our plans --
They may put us in Police wagons and take us to jail --
But -- we are still here to fight -- another day --
Don’t worry Carolyn -- we got your back --

We are Season Seniors -- we know how to take our stand --
How to make demands -- Mass. Senior Action fights back!

From a window the M.B.T.A. they watched --
They never thought -- we won’t get taken down --
“We fight -- take charge!”
There is strength in numbers and we are Social Justice Warriors -- on a Mission --
“There’s no stopping us now!”

Social Justice Warriors sat in numbers in wheelchairs -- with canes --
We took our fight to MassDOT -- we also took our demands --
We brought postcards to Governor Baker’s but he never seemed to be around --
Seems they heard we were around and they block every bend --
They never realize that our Social Justice Warriors would return again --
As long as we not able to keep our assets covered!
As long as you can’t close Medicare donut holes!
We will not be silent!
As long as you ignore our knockings!
We will bring postcards --

You will find our Blue Shirts in numbers
Sitting -- waiting -- riding in your halls -- fighting the good fight --
Don’t count us out! We come for respect --
We may be older -- but -- we are not weaker --
Watch for us -- we are coming back again --
And again in numbers until you get it right -- we will fight --

Remember we don’t take it -- we take charge!
Ain’t no stopping us now -- we’re on the move!

Thank those who moved on -- You will not be forgotten.
Maya -- “We may encounter many defeats but we must not be defeated”
Gandhi -- “Action expresses priorities”
STATE BUDGET: WHERE ARE WE NOW?

- A total of $5,652,554 has been cut from the Executive office of Elder Affairs line items.
- As a whole, the home care program is slated to receive a $10.83 million increase, but some specific programs will see significant decreases.
- Funding for protective services will likely be insufficient to handle abuse reports for the entire year.
- Adult Foster Care programs will lose $10 million in cuts.
- The elder meals program was not cut, but it is essentially level funded to FY17 levels, which means there will be a cut in meals because the cost per meal will rise in FY18.
- Geriatric mental health services jumped from $200,000 to $500,000 -- but was vetoed by the Governor. The legislature may choose to override this veto.
- A new Home Care Registry and home health agency licensure process were created.

STATE BUDGET UNSETTLED, LAWMAKERS DEBATE CUTS

More than one month into the new state fiscal year and the Commonwealth still does not have an final approved budget. The state budget funds many of the services we all rely on including transportation, education, public safety, senior services, and health care.

Each year the Governor and Legislature have to agree on how much money they think the state will receive through taxes and fees and then how to spend it. It is easy to look across the state budget and see opportunity for more spending, but the Massachusetts constitution requires that we have a balanced budget approved for the year ahead, which means priorities must be decided. This year MassHealth spending has been at the center of many debates.

From the start, Governor Baker made it clear that one of his goals was to reign in MassHealth spending.

MassHealth provides health insurance for almost 1.9 million low-income residents of Massachusetts, including children, adults, and 130,000 seniors. However, as healthcare costs have gone up while the need has stayed steady, MassHealth has taken up a growing share of the budget. Currently, MassHealth accounts for about 40% of the state budget, more than $16 billion a year, but MassHealth

GOVERNOR BAKER’S VETO LEADS TO TRANSIT CUTS

Across the Commonwealth, public transportation is on the chopping block. The most recent battle to save public transportation has been in Western Mass. The State Budget cut $1.38 million from the already-struggling Pioneer Valley Transportation Authority (PVTA). The PVTA is based in Springfield and carries about 12 million passengers a year, a number that has risen steadily since the Great Recession.

In July, the PVTA Advisory board voted to eliminate bus service on 20 routes, saving $838,000 in the coming year in an effort to offset the money lost from state budget cuts.

The PVTA had formulated its budget assuming its share from the statewide regional transit agency’s pool of $82 million would’ve yielded $23.5 million.

However, Gov. Charlie Baker’s budget cut that pool to $80 million, of which PVTA would get $22.9 million. Legislators tried to restore some of the cut money, but Baker vetoed it. The PVTA will likely get only the $22.9 million.

These service cuts impact seniors, workers, and students. Those affected, including Mass Senior Action Council Springfield Chapter, Jobs with Justice, and Neighbor to Neighbor, protested expected cuts to PVTA bus service and spoke out at the public meet-

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also brings in more federal funds than any other program, which makes it a little more complicated.

In the final stage of the budget Governor Baker threw the Legislature a bit of a curve ball by proposing a number of MassHealth reforms. While many legislators agree that MassHealth spending needs to be addressed they did not agree that these large changes should be pushed through as a last minute budget amendment without thorough consideration and public input.

Mass Senior Action was very concerned with the Governor’s proposal to get the authority to determine the benefits MassHealth provides without any legislative process. This authority would allow the Administration to reduce or eliminate “optional” benefits on their own. “Optional” benefits include many essential services such as: prescription drugs, clinic services, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech/language/hearing therapy, dental care, prosthetics, optometry, eyeglasses, chiropractic services, personal care attendants, and hospice. These services seem far from optional.

Also among his proposals was a plan to transition 370,000 low-income non-disabled adults from Masshealth to other programs with fewer benefits.

Advocates raised concerns about the impact of the plan on low income consumers and the working poor. The Massachusetts Law Reform Institute (MLRI) and Health Care for All (HCFA) reported, “The Baker Administration describes this as a transition from MassHealth to ConnectorCare, but not all of those losing MassHealth will qualify for ConnectorCare, and the ConnectorCare plan costs more and offers less coverage. Those who are forced off of MassHealth will see much higher out-of-pocket expenses.”

Governor Baker did propose some new cost saving measures that also could improve access to affordable care by expanding the “scope of practice” for professionals like optometrists, advanced practice RNs, and mid level practitioners like dental therapists. In previous MSAC newsletters we have reported on our support for the dental therapists. We know seniors across the Commonwealth struggle to find proper dental care, and passing legislation to create dental therapists would be a step towards access for many.

Bristol County members with lawmakers to discuss impact of budget cuts.

Being that MassHealth takes up 40 percent of the state budget, Mass Senior Action agrees that community members, advocates, and lawmakers should work towards a comprehensive plan. We would like to explore new options that do not penalize employers, low-income workers, and seniors, but perhaps instead offer new opportunities for us to work together to ensure everyone has access to affordable care.

Mass Senior Action Council has a history of not just fighting for justice but finding creative solutions. If the decision-makers are willing to find a solution, the people are ready to help.

MSAC Member Kathy Paul testified, with the support of members around her, in favor of the legislation to improve access to dental care by creating a role for dental therapists.
BRIDGING THE GAP ACROSS THE COMMONWEALTH
Members reach out in the community to build support

On June 9, MSAC’s Greater Springfield Chapter participated in Senator Eric Lesser’s Thrive After 55 Wellness Fair. The program of events had informational seminars on Elder Law, Nutrition, and Yoga & Movement. MSAC members Mary Brainerd, Mattie Lacewell, and Shirley McCready diligently worked the event and shared MSAC resources. Their introduction of our “Bridge the Gap” campaign to the region was well received at this event. Senator Lesser encouraged attendees to stop by our resource table to learn more about MSAC’s important work. It was a successful event that gave our “Bridge the Gap” postcard drive a real boost.

BRIDGE THE GAP IN YOUR COMMUNITY
MSAC would like to hear from you and your neighbors! We could host a coffee hour, present to a large group, or set up a meeting with your legislator. If you want to join the campaign to lower health care costs for people 65 and over, contact MSAC: 617-284-1234 or cvillers@masssenioraction.org.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TODAY TO SUPPORT SENIOR HEALTH CARE?

CALL Governor Baker and tell him Massachusetts seniors are struggling and that it is time to make sure healthcare is affordable for all Massachusetts residents, including our seniors. (617) 725-4005

WRITE a letter to tell the Governor and Legislators your experience of trying to pay for healthcare while paying for other needs. You can mail it to Mass Senior Action and we will send a copy to the Governor, your Representative, and your Senator.

HOST a meeting. Do you want more information? Do you now others that do to. You can arrange meeting in your building, senior center or even in your home. Call Mass Senior Action and ask to speak with one of our community organizers. (617) 284-1234
May 23rd, 2017, Housing Advocates cringed when President Trump unveiled his 2018 HUD budget request consisting of drastic cuts to senior, family, and disabled housing. It proposed a decrease of $6.2 billion (13.2%) compared to this year’s funds, achieved through both discontinuing certain projects and reducing funding for persisting programs.

For example, Trump suggested that 3 billion dollars of the cut would come from eliminating the Community Development Block Grant Program. This program has funded community development projects since the late 70’s when it was created, including being a big funding source for Meals on Wheels, parks, and local non-profits who serve the most vulnerable in the community. Another program that was suggested for termination was the HOME Investments Partnerships Program, which provides funding to create new affordable housing or maintain older developments. In the past, Mass Senior Action Council has worked with local non-profit developers to save otherwise at-risk units using this fund.

Trump also proposed to shrink the Public Housing Operating fund, the pot of money used to subsidize rent for families living in public housing. It is speculated that under the Trump budget, this fund would be decreased by up to 11% in 2018. Over 37,000 families in the state of Massachusetts -- over 2,000 in Boston alone -- live in public housing and would be at risk for a loss or reduction in their rental assistance.

“The proposed cuts to the federal HUD budget will have devastating effects on the elderly, children, poor & working families, and disabled individuals that rely on public housing to provide a modest home that they would not otherwise be able to afford,” said BHA Administrator Bill McGonagle. “The HUD budget cuts are clearly being driven by a desire to limit federal spending for the legitimate needs of poor and working families to facilitate tax cuts for the very rich.”

Importantly, Trump’s budget request also proposed changes in the structure of housing subsidies. This would increase the percentage low income families are required to pay toward housing costs from 30% adjusted to 35% gross resident income, as well as eliminate reimbursement for utilities. This would affect many people in public housing, including those with Section 202, public housing for elders. For these seniors and low income workers, many living on $1000 or less a month, rent could go from $300/month to over $500/month!

MSAC Metro North made housing a focus when a surge of homeless seniors spoke out at monthly chapter meetings. Chapter President Karen Lynch responded to the cuts, “We know how tough it already is to find suitable senior housing in our cities, and the slashing of this program would have been a tremendous loss to possible opportunities for new affordable housing for our people. The Federal Government continues to cut housing funding when it is needed more now than ever.”

The budget request originally proposed that Section 811, the program used to subsidize the rents of people with disabilities across the nation, would lose up to 17% of its funding in the coming year. Additionally, the amount of money proposed to go to Section 202 nonprofit sponsors would be 24% below what is necessary for the program to be fully funded, meaning that many seniors eligible for this rental assistance would lose vital housing support.

Continued on next page
Housing advocates fought the Administration’s proposals in a campaign called “Save HUD 202” spearheaded by LeadingAge (one of Mass Senior Action’s coalition partners!). They are saying no to housing cuts and have urged representatives to influence the budget. The budget bill recently approved by the House HUD appropriations subcommittee seems to reflect that some representatives have listened to elder activists. As the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities explains, “While the bill largely rejects the draco-nian HUD cuts the President’s budget proposed, it fails to provide the funding needed to maintain rental assistance.”

In addition, while the approved budget bill does not provide nearly enough money for the Community Development Block Grant Program or for the HOME Investments Partnerships Program to meet their needs, the bill does not eliminate them entirely as the original Trump budget request had attempted to do.

The process isn’t over yet - there are still more committees that will weigh in before the final budget is set in stone for the year. Looking at how this budget process has gone so far, it is clear that senior voices are a necessary force to ensure that housing is made affordable and accessible to every person in our communities.

Check out LeadingAge’s “Save HUD 202” campaign: [http://www.leadaging.org/save-hud-202](http://www.leadaging.org/save-hud-202) or [www.ace-ej.org](http://www.ace-ej.org) to find out what ACE (Alternatives for Community & Environment) is doing to organize against cuts and create affordable housing.
MSAC Springfield member Anush Dawidjan protested transportation cuts with allies. Transit Cuts cont'd from page 9

PVTA Advisory Board member Richard Theroux told a crowd of riders who spoke out against cutting bus trips: “There is no commitment on the part of the state government to support this service.”

PVTA Administrator Sandra E. Sheehan said the agency would look at raising fares next year if revenue is needed to make the 2018-19 budget work.

The standard adult fare is now $1.25, although there are discounts for buying at a ticket counter versus paying on the bus, for using a bus pass, and for seniors and children.

Northampton Mayor David Narkewicz said a fare increase is not the answer. “For one thing, bus passengers are already under financial strain. For another thing, PVTA gets only about 7% of its budget at the farebox. There is just not that much to be made in fares,” he said.

The vote capped a two-hour public meeting during which people called for more, not less, bus service.

Mass Senior Action Council joined other groups to come up with budget solutions, rather than service cuts.

Listed are 3 proposals that should be considered before cuts are implemented:

1. Requiring the 18 member-cities and -towns of PVTA to contribute some additional funds to cover the funding gap for the short-term.

2. Requesting that major employers and local business (such as MGM, Mass Mutual, BayState West, Holyoke Mall, Smith & Wesson) voluntarily contribute or pay for a transit assessment.

3. Requesting that the “5 Colleges” contribute more funding immediately since the funding they provided in the last few years has been less than their arrangement with PVTA.

MSAC and our allies are not going to take these cuts. We are going to fight for public transit funding. Join us to make public transit a public good.

RIDERS Left on Hold!
New Call Center stalls progress.

The MBTA paratransit service known as the RIDE is lifeline for many. MSAC members have fought hard to ensure the transportation service is accessible and affordable for those who depend on it to stay active and healthy in their community.

MSAC North Shore member, Rutha Ray, has taken the RIDE to church in Boston from her home in Lynn every Sunday for the last 8 years. She was used to some of the delays and the long routes but she was thankful the transportation allowed her to stay connected with her church community since moving to Lynn.

In May, when the MBTA started their new call center for the RIDE, Rutha’s weekly trips became much more of an ordeal. One Sunday, her return trip was late by 30 minutes so she called to see why, and when she could expect a driver. They told her they didn’t have any vehicles and that she should call back every 15 minutes. Fortunately, Rutha has family in the area to wait with while making those calls because she ended up waiting three and half hours for her return trip back home.

The dispatch told Rutha that they were short drivers due to the holiday weekend and that on top of the wait, she would need to go back to the church because the driver could not pick her up at the location she was waiting at.

Rutha’s experience is not an

Story cont’d on next page
Mattie Lacewell has a history of social activism from her work with Fair Share to serving as the Director of the Upper Hill Resident Council, Inc. She retired from Monson Development Center where she worked as a Mental Health Care Administrator. Mattie has been a life-long resident of Springfield with lineage roots of Alabama. Her activism was sparked from neighborhood concerns.

She is a valued activist in the Greater Springfield MSAC Chapter, having served as Secretary and active member of the Membership Committee, and now as its Vice President. She has been serving this term and engaging in our “Bridge the Gap” healthcare campaign, raising the question to community and legislators alike, “If not now, then when?” Her voice helps to affirm, rearticulate, and publicly express the Elder Economic Security issue. She shares our Bridge the Gap message that 6 out of every 10 MA seniors living alone facing economic insecurity is “simply not acceptable.”

When she isn’t active in her community and church groups, she spends time working in the garden, teaching youth bible school, and in local civic engagement.

RIDERS from page 14

isolated incident. In fact hundreds of people had rides that never came or drivers sent to the wrong address, or came hours later than scheduled.

MSAC embraced the idea of the central call center because of the potential improvements and cost savings to the program. One exciting benefit is that customers will no longer need to transfer between vendors to complete their trips; this means direct routes to places that currently come with a wait and a switching of vehicles for the RIDERS.

At this point, 2 of the 3 ride vendors have transitioned to the call center with the remaining vendor, Veterans, still pending. Thanks to MSAC members like Rutha speaking up, the MBTA Board is now monitoring the performance and is prioritizing that the service has stabilized before the third vendor transitions. Because of input of MSAC members and the community, service has improved, but MBTA data exposes that there are still more missed trips than before the central call center. This is one of several changes coming to the RIDE and it will be essential that those who rely on this public transportation speak up for quality affordable transit. MSAC continues to attend the MBTA Board meetings to bring these problems to light and to ensure the RIDERS voices are part of the solution.

If you have had a problem with your RIDE experience, contact the MBTA complaint line 617-222-5123 and also tell your local MSAC organizer. Add your voice to make transportation reliable for your community.
2017 Biennial Convention
Wednesday, Oct. 11, 10am - 3pm

Calling all current and future MSAC members!

Our biennial convention will be held on
Wednesday, Oct. 11, from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm
at our offices at 108 Myrtle St, Quincy
(T access & free parking)

$10.00 Includes lunch & transportation from most areas. RSVP by Oct. 4

Name: _______________________________________________________________

Address: __________________________________________________________________

Phone: ________________________ Email: ___________________________________

$10.00 ticket for members: How many: __________

I cannot attend but would like to donate to MSAC $__________

Cut out and Mail this form with your check to the address listed, or call
(617-284-1234), or buy tickets at www.MassSeniorAction.org

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Same Great Content
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