



The Campaign to **STRENGTHEN
HUMAN SERVICES**
IMPROVE CARE • RETAIN QUALITY STAFF
ENHANCE ECONOMIC IMPACT

Implementing Chapter 257

Running Toward A Brighter Tomorrow

by Joshua Komyerov

Special to The Collaborative

PART THREE

A Lot on the Line

No Pain, No Gain

Nobody ever said that running a marathon is easy. Indeed, the long, arduous road to reforming Massachusetts' entire human services rate-setting system is a daunting task. But that's exactly the point. In the end, the result will be well worth the pain and effort.



As posited in the previous installment of this series, passage in 2008 of Chapter 257 - the landmark rate-setting reform legislation - even after a decade-long struggle, was merely akin to qualifying for the Boston Marathon. Fortunately, today, nearly four years after the bill's passage, we have started the race and, with some recent successes, the wind is at our backs. Still, we have a long, long way to go.

In Part II of this series, we took a trip to the future. By visualizing victory, we saw how different (and better) Massachusetts would look with a fully implemented Chapter 257. Now, in the last of this three-part series, we will take a few steps back to consider what's at stake; in other words, why completing our marathon is so critical for the human services industry and the Commonwealth as a whole.

Changing Everything... Step by Step

Certainly, having seen the future, your head is spinning. The

Implementing Chapter 257, Part Three

In this series, *The Collaborative* examines what the passage of the landmark Chapter 257 law will mean for the human services industry in Massachusetts once it is implemented. This article is the last in the three-part series.

Chapter 257 Links

[Mass. Information Site](#)

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[Executive Order No. 536](#)

concept of completely deconstructing then reconstructing a mammoth rate-setting system is virtually unimaginable. But we simply put one foot in front of another, over and over again, until we had bulldozed a muddled maze of bureaucratic regulations and habits, replacing it with a well-planned - but essentially simple - model.

The approach and execution of running this race is straightforward, yet the benefits will be invaluable: increased transparency and consistency in rate-setting practices, predictability and standardization for thousands of negotiated contracts, better coordination among departments purchasing similar services, greater contract amendment flexibility, increased opportunities for provider engagement and input, and streamlined procurement cycles which are managed centrally.



Transparency: Just one benefit of implementing Chapter 257

The Stakes

What's at stake in finally implementing Chapter 257 to the full spirit of the law? The answer may sound grandiose, but it's absolutely true. At stake is the very health and vitality of our \$2.2 billion human services industry, a sector larger and as essential as the state's telecommunications industry. Before Chapter 257 - or pre-marathon, if you will - our system was severely ill. Our arteries were clogged, our muscles ached. Our heart was beating, but only dully. The human services system was alive, but languishing.



You look good, for a guy in your shape.

Like a body that is severely out of shape, we paid dearly for this ill-health. Throughout the system, none of our parts - employers, employees, clients, partners - are quite as energized, as robust, or as full of life as they can and should be.

At no time of year is this damaged state of affairs more apparent than during the dreaded budget season. As the calendar turns to each New Year, the euphoric holiday cheer fades and the stressors of an imposing budget season inevitably overtake us. We find ourselves

desperately explaining to our elected officials the havoc that would ensue if services are cut further. Collectively, we cannot breathe. We are suffocating under the weight of budgetary stresses, worrying ourselves sick.

So what will Chapter 257 implementation change? Everything. It will change our world and the world of each of the million-plus people who are touched by human services in Massachusetts. If we, along with our partners in the State House, maintain our momentum, finish this marathon and bring Chapter 257 to fruition, it will mean tangible, measurable improvements in the lives of our

What is the Collaborative?

The Collaborative is a coalition of the state's three major human service provider trade groups. They joined forces a decade ago primarily to champion rate-setting reform and ensure a bright future for the industry. Its members include [The Providers' Council](#), [The Association for Behavioral Healthcare](#) and [The Association of Developmental Disabilities Providers](#)

consumers, our organizations, our staffs and our relationships with state agencies.

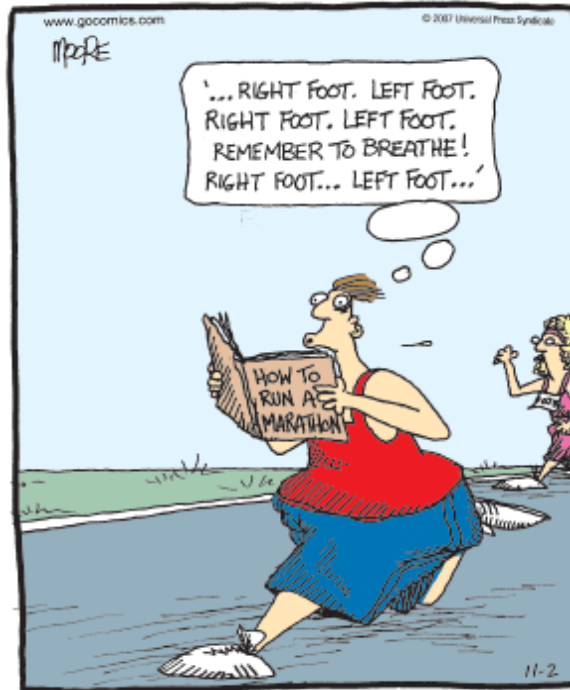
A Marathon, Not A Sprint

Over the past year, the Patrick Administration has begun to work more closely with The Collaborative around Chapter 257 implementation. While we still await the Governor's implementation of the important Advisory committee, there is an increased willingness to make this all work as originally envisioned when the Governor signed Chapter 257 into law.

It may be too early to call it a proven track record, but we're clearly on the right path. But remember, this is a marathon not a sprint, and Chapter 257 won't be fully implemented in a day, a month or even a year.

Finishing this marathon is the only way to protect Massachusetts' essential human services safety net, and ensure that the 1,100 social service providers who contract with the state retain their ability - and stability - to deliver high-quality, low-cost disability services, elder services, transitional assistance, and services to children and families, among other things.

The stakes of this race are enormous. Let's keep pushing until we cross that finish line.



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