



## March 2022 Advisory Board Statewide Updates

### DTA Commissioner Transition

On March 8<sup>th</sup>, the Board of Early Education and Care voted to appoint DTA Commissioner Amy Kershaw as Acting Commissioner of the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC), effective March 28<sup>th</sup>.

Effective Monday, March 28<sup>th</sup>, Mary Sheehan, the Department's current Chief Operating Officer, was appointed Acting Commissioner of DTA. Mary's nearly 22 years of public service, and her deep dedication to the work of the agency, positions DTA well to continue to serve the residents of the Commonwealth.

### P-EBT for School Year 2021-2022

The Baker-Polito Administration [announced](#) that Massachusetts received federal approval to provide Pandemic EBT (P-EBT) benefits to school-age children and their families through school year 2021-2022, supporting children who were unable to attend school due to COVID-related absences. These benefits are estimated to support 4750,000 students, bringing \$22 million into the state's economy. P-EBT benefits will begin to be issued to families in the end of May. Additional information about the program for this school year can be found at [Mass.gov/P-EBT](https://Mass.gov/P-EBT) and [map-ebt.org](https://map-ebt.org).

### FY23 Budget Testimony

On February 15<sup>th</sup>, former Commissioner Kershaw delivered virtual testimony on Governor Baker's Fiscal Year 2023 budget proposal to the Joint Committee on Ways and Means. This budget strongly positions DTA to continue working towards the agency's mission, while responding to fluctuations in the state's SNAP, TAFDC, and EAEDC caseloads and promoting benefit stability for the households we serve.

View the Commissioner's [written testimony](#) and all Executive Office of Health and Human Services FY23 [budget testimony](#).

### Massachusetts Nutrition Month

In recognition of Governor Baker's Massachusetts Nutrition Month Declaration and the importance of state and federal nutrition programs, Secretary of Health and Human Services Marylou Sudders, Secretary of Elder Affairs Elizabeth Chen, and DTA Acting Commissioner Mary Sheehan visited the Pembroke Council on Aging on March 31<sup>st</sup>. March also marks the 50th Anniversary of the Older Americans Act Senior Nutrition Program, which provides older adults in Massachusetts with nutritious congregate and home-delivered meals, screenings, education, and counseling. [Read more about the event and all of the cross-secretariat ways the Administration is working to support resident food security.](#)

### **SUA Increase**

Beginning in March 2022, approximately 200,000 Massachusetts households [received an increase in their monthly SNAP benefits](#) to reflect increased consumer costs this winter. The Commonwealth received federal approval to adjust the average state utility costs used to calculate SNAP benefit amounts, which will result in an average increase of \$8 in SNAP households' monthly benefits. The adjustment is expected to bring an estimated \$1.4 million into the state, supporting families and the local economy.

### **SNAP Online Purchasing Vendors**

The Baker-Polito Administration recently announced the addition of two new retailers to the Commonwealth's SNAP Online Purchasing Program, [Daily Table](#) ([Spanish](#) release) and [Price Rite](#) ([Spanish](#) release). The addition of these two retailers brings the total number of SNAP online retailers in the program to 9. Daily Table and Price Rite join Stop & Shop, BJ's, Walmart, and Amazon, as well as ALDI, Hannaford, Price Chopper and Stop & Shop via Instacart. Across retailers, residents have spent over \$133 million in SNAP benefits to-date buying groceries online. For more information on the Massachusetts program, visit [www.Mass.gov/SNAPOnline](http://www.Mass.gov/SNAPOnline).

### **Videos in ASL (Vlogs)**

DTA recently worked with the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MCDHH) to create videos in American Sign Language (ASL). The first round of videos focuses on different job descriptions and opportunities at DTA and will be important tools in our work to recruit and retain an inclusive workforce. We also created two videos that focus on employment opportunities for our clients, with one that has a particular focus on employment opportunities for people with disabilities through our collaboration with the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC), known as Empowering to Employ.

These videos and more are available on DTA's [YouTube channel](#).

### **Updated Multilingual Resources**

As part of our ongoing work to support language access for our clients, DTA has expanded the languages our [SNAP Outreach flyers](#) and [EBT brochures](#) are available in. SNAP Outreach flyers are now available in 14 languages, while the EBT brochures are available in 6 languages.

### **Texting Campaigns**

DTA continues to leverage its texting capabilities to connect clients with important resources in partnership with sister agencies. In January, DTA and DHCD collaborated to send out multilingual text messages to over 69,000 households receiving SNAP with information about the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), commonly known as Fuel Assistance. To date, this outreach has contributed to an 85% increase in LIHEAP applications from households receiving DTA benefits as compared to last year. DTA and DHCD are working together on an ongoing additional fuel assistance outreach to SNAP households who have a person who is age 60 or older or have a disability throughout the end of March.

In the beginning of March, DTA sent out a text message on the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit (CTC) to our entire caseload, encouraging households to file their taxes. This outreach was in conjunction with our annual EITC mailing that was updated this year to include information on the advance CTC payments. DTA's tax credit outreach, in partnership with the Find Your Funds collaboration of organizations, was recently [highlighted by the White House](#).