The Boston Center for Independent Living engaged in essential, spirited advocacy in 2017 and again provided high-quality services, advancing the cause of independence for thousands of people with disabilities in Greater Boston and across the state. During the year, hundreds of thousands of disabled people across America faced a potential loss of Medicaid. In Massachusetts alone, 1.9 million people are on Medicaid, known as MassHealth, including 90,000 adults and children with disability. Proposals in Congress would have stalled Medicaid funding while also diminishing coverage as required by the Affordable Care Act for those with pre-existing conditions. The situation was dire—and may again be—but at the forefront of hard-fighting advocacy that fought off cuts were disability rights activists, including BCIL members.

Aligning with groups such as ADAPT, Community Catalyst, and Health Care for All, BCIL members spoke on local and clear for Medicaid at events in Boston, Washington, DC (at the office of Senator Susan Collins), and Providence, RI (when the Vice President was in town), via calls, emails, letters, and tweets. In many ways the faces that most captured the vital importance of Medicaid were those of people with disabilities, including BCIL members.

Donations & Dues
A donation to BCIL helps us to annually provide services to over 4,000 people with disabilities and advocate on housing, health care, PCA services, ADA compliance, employment, and more. As a cross-disability organization that works with any person who identifies with a disability and chooses to use BCIL services, we rely on the generosity of members, corporations, foundations, and individuals to support the independence of people with disabilities in Greater Boston.
We also partnered with CHAPA—the Citizens Housing and Planning Association—and the Disability Policy Consortium to support the Alternative Housing Voucher Program. As this report went to print we were notified that approximately 50 new AHP VIFs would soon be funded for people with disabilities. The acute shortage of affordable housing has hampered people with disabilities in and around Boston, and across the commonwealth. We worked closely with the City of Boston’s Disability Task Force, established by Mayor Marty Walsh, and in July a series of steps to open new accessible units were announced, including requirements that 10% of funded projects be accessible, twice the ratio mandated by fair housing laws.

BCIL’s direct service staff defiantly stepped up to the plate to help people addition their individual housing situations. 42 people were assisted to obtain affordable units and 59 were assisted to remain in the face of eviction, rent hikes, or placement in a nursing home. The organizational youth staff supported over twenty youth with disabilities in real internships at a dozen intern sites, partnering to enhance our efforts to confront employment barriers. The BCIL consumer-directed PCA program again served over 2,500 people, who used supports for activities such as bathing, hairdressing, and eating, which helped many to avoid institutionalization and many others to go to work. Advocates also provided vital service coordination for hundreds enrolled in the One Care program, and information and referral services were provided to approximately 2,000 people.

thank you, above, are extended to our members and consumers, whose energy, dedication, and insights infuse our work each year. We greatly applaud the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts Foundation, United Way, USS, Community Catalyst, the Jeff Thompson-Charitable Fund, Commonwealth Corporation, the East Boston Savings Bank Foundation, and the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute that generously support our service and advocacy work. Indispensable support for our many independent living services is provided by the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, the Executive Office of Elder Affairs, and MassHealth. BCIL also salutes strong partnerships—including one mentioned already—with the Disability Law Center, Greater Boston Legal Services, System Wide Accessibility at the NAIR, (17797041), MassADAPT, the Commonwealth Care Alliance, the National Center on Independent Living, Boston Area Rape Crisis Center, Tenafly Unlimited, the state’s other ILGs, and member agencies of the Boston, Merrimack, and Southeastern Massachusetts Aging and Disability Resource Consortiums. In 2017 we still again meet the challenge of these our way, empowering individuals and empowering the disability community to advance independence and integration.

Thank you!

Bill Henning, Executive Director
Sergio Goncalves, Board Chairperson November 2017

SUCCESS STORIES

Bill Henning & Sergio Goncalves

Dr. Lisa Iezzoni & Dr. Reed Drews

Erik Gustafson & Scott Forman

Dr. Lisa Iezzoni & Dr. Reed Drews

BCIL Marie Feltin Award Ceremony

2017 BCIL Marie Feltin Award winners: Jeff Kolken, Liz Weintraub for the Disability Policy Consortium, and Robin Callahan.

Over 300 people filled the room for the 21st annual BCIL Marie Feltin Award Ceremony to honor people embodying the pioneering spirit of the late Dr. Marie Feltin, who was a powerful advocate for people with disabilities. Our remarkable honorees this year included: a leader in public service dedicated to advancing access to quality health care; a leader in public service dedicated to advancing access to quality health care; a leader in public service dedicated to advancing access to quality health care; a leader in public service dedicated to advancing access to quality health care; a leader in public service dedicated to advancing access to quality health care; a leader in public service dedicated to advancing access to quality health care; a leader in public service dedicated to advancing access to quality health care; a leader in public service dedicated to advancing access to quality health care; a leader in public service dedicated to advancing access to quality health care; a leader in public service dedicated to advancing access to quality health care; a leader in public service dedicated to advancing access to quality health care; a leader in public service dedicated to advancing access to quality health care; a leader in public service dedicated to advancing access to quality health care; a leader in public service dedicated to advancing access to quality health care; a leader in public service dedicated to advancing access to quality health care; a leader in public service dedicated to advancing access to quality health care; a leader in public service dedicated to advancing access to quality health care; a leader in public service dedicated to advancing access to quality health care; a leader in public service dedicated to advancing access to quality health care; a leader in public service dedicated to advancing access to quality health care; a leader in public service dedicated to advancing access to quality health care; a leader in public service dedicated to advancing access to quality health care; a leader in public service dedicated to advancing access to quality health care; a leader in public service dedicated to advancing access to quality health care; a leader in public service dedicated to advancing access to quality health care; a leader in public service dedicated to advancing access to quality health care. Above Us, By Us. The ceremony again benefited from our great friend, Dr. Robert Master, and our master of ceremony, Dr. Lisa Iezzoni.

Mark Your Calendars

The 22nd annual BCIL Marie Feltin Award Ceremony will be held Friday, March 23, 2018 at The Fairmont Copley Plaza Hotel.