

# Massachusetts could lose \$628 million, or 76% of Medicaid funding

By Michael P. Norton  
State House News Service

Massachusetts hospitals that serve disproportionate numbers of patients on Medicaid or who lack health insurance are pressing to block or delay nearly \$630 million in federal funding cuts that were originally enacted in 2010 as part of the Affordable Care Act.

The cuts, which have been delayed several times, are currently set to kick in on Oct. 1, according to the Massachusetts Health and Hospital Association, and would come as Gov. Maura Healey and the Legislature just agreed this month on \$180 million in state aid to be delivered to financially stressed hospitals.

The cuts would total \$8 billion annually across the country from fiscal years 2024 through 2027, the association said, with Massachusetts standing to be among the hardest hit states because of a formula requiring the largest percentage of cuts be applied to the states with the highest percentage of insured individuals.

Massachusetts could lose \$628.6 million, or 76 percent of its current Medicaid funding for “disproportionate share” hospitals, the MHA said, citing Medicaid and CHIP Payment and Access Commission estimates and warning that “significant harm will occur if the scheduled Medicaid DSH cuts are not stopped.”

Pending legislation known as the PATIENT Act includes a section that would eliminate the scheduled cuts for fiscal

years 2024 and 2025.

In an Aug. 4 letter to U.S. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, more than half the members of that branch, including Sens. Elizabeth Warren and Ed Markey, wrote that required funding reductions were tethered to the Affordable Care Act's goal of increasing health insurance coverage so that hospitals would no longer need the additional payments, which date back as far as 1981, to offset uncompensated care costs.

"Those coverage levels have not been fully realized yet these hospitals continue to care for uninsured and underinsured patients," the senators wrote in their letter, which the hospital association drew attention to in its Monday Report.

They added, "The Medicaid DSH program keeps many hospitals financially viable and able to provide care to vulnerable individuals. Drastic cuts to this program could lead to a reduction in access to care for those who need it most."

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## Shrinking Of MassHealth Rolls Accelerated In June

Chris Lisinski  
State House News Service

More than 33,000 Bay Staters lost MassHealth coverage in June after being dubbed no longer eligible or failing to provide enough documentation, officials said Tuesday.

Since the state kicked off a year-long eligibility review of all 2.4 million members in April, just shy of 69,000 people

have been stripped from the MassHealth rolls, according to new data published by the Executive Office of Health and Human Services. Nearly half of that reduction took place in June, the third month of the process.

In a summary of the latest data, MassHealth officials called the trend “an expected modest increase” after the first two months did not show sizable losses. MassHealth, which combines the state’s Medicaid and Children’s Health Insurance Program, also added 15,497 new members in June. Officials described that as a relatively routine monthly increase.

Most of the people kicked from the rolls last month, about 23,000, were between the ages of 21 and 64. Another 5,857 were younger than 20, while 3,937 were 65 or older. Health insurance is required in Massachusetts and people losing MassHealth eligibility must obtain private insurance through their employer or spouse’s employer, secure a plan offered through the Health Connector, or face tax penalties for not being insured.

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## **Southcoast Health Invests in the Ion Endoluminal System, Providing Leading Edge Surgical Options to Diagnose and Treat Lung Disease**

Southcoast Health announced today the arrival of the Ion endoluminal system, at Charlton Memorial Hospital in Fall River. This Intuitive robotic-assisted system resolves a

challenging aspect of lung biopsies providing surgeons the ability to obtain tissue samples deep within the lung.

“We are thrilled to add this advanced technology to our robotic surgery offerings across the system,” said Dr. LaRock, Physician-in-Chief of Surgical Care for Southcoast Health. “Expanding the availability of robotic surgery across specialties is not only beneficial for our patients, but enables our providers to perform complex procedures with more precision, flexibility and control than with conventional surgical techniques. I am proud to bring this resource to Charlton Memorial, further demonstrating our commitment to our patients and advanced cardiothoracic care.”

Dr. Desiree Steimer, a thoracic surgeon, will lead the Southcoast Health team with the use of the Ion surgical system. “What makes this robot special is that it is one of the first to make it possible to deliver diagnosis and treatment of diseases such as lung cancer, in the same surgical procedure,” said Dr. Steimer. “If real-time confirmation of a representative tissue sample is available, we eliminate the need for a second procedure, saving the patient time, worry, and delivering treatment on the spot. This technology gives us the opportunity to reimagine our approach to treating lung disease.”



According to the American Cancer Society, lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer death in the United States, currently accounting for about 1 in 5 of all cancer deaths. The Ion surgical system is a tool that can help detect this disease at earlier stages. The robotic-assisted bronchoscopy platform features an ultra-thin, ultra-maneuverable catheter that allows navigation far into the peripheral lung with a minimally invasive approach.

Bringing the Ion Surgical System to Southcoast Health was made possible, in part, through a generous donation by the Thomas A. Rodgers Jr. Family Foundation.

“We are delighted to be able to help bring this innovative and minimally invasive surgical system to the region,” said Foundation President Sarah Rodgers McNeill. “Southcoast Health is home to world-class physicians who provide care for our families, friends, and neighbors and the Rodgers Family Foundation is proud to support them in this work. Together we are excited to see the advancements in lung disease treatment.”

To learn more about Ion technology at Southcoast Health, please visit [Ion Robotic-Assisted Endoluminal System | Southcoast Health](#).

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## **New Bedford Police hosting a community event today to address homelessness**

The New Bedford Police Department is hosting an event Tuesday, July 25th from 4:30pm-6:30pm to help with homelessness and the

problems surrounding the issue. The event will take place at the New Bedford Police Department's public safety center located at 912 Brock Ave.

Poverty, unemployment, and lack of affordable housing are commonly recognized causes of homelessness. These risk factors can be exacerbated by personal vulnerabilities such as mental and substance use disorders, trauma and violence, domestic violence, justice-system involvement, sudden serious illness, divorce, death of a partner, and disabilities.

The New Bedford Police Department is inviting city residents to attend a community info session so you can meet with service providers and guest speakers to discuss the resources available to support those of you who are at either risk of becoming homeless, or need immediate support.

**Here is a list of agencies that will be presenting at the event:**

- Catholic social services
- New Bedford Housing Authority
- New Bedford Office of Housing & Community Development
- North Star Learning Center
- Steppingstones – Project FAIHR
- The Women's Center





*New Bedford Police Department photo.*

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## **“HOTWORX” Dartmouth’s 24 Hour infrared sauna fitness studio opening soon**

“Hotworx,” a ‘round the clock,’ infrared sauna fitness studio is coming to Dartmouth soon!

Located at 75-B Faunce Corner Mall Rd., just next door to the Christmas Tree Shop, they will offer members unlimited, 24-hour access to a variety of virtually instructed, infrared sauna workouts. Members achieve their fitness goals with what Hotworx calls ‘3D Training,’ which is a powerful combination of heat, infrared energy, and exercise.





*Steven Richards photo.*

"We created this infrared sauna workout program for people who want to flush toxins from their bodies, increase flexibility, balance, tone, and burn massive amounts of calories in the process.

So whether you want to polish off your gym workout, or you're strictly a spa-goer who wants to enhance your regime, this innovation could be a major component of your wellness program in the future. The results will blow you away!"

You will be able to stop inside on July 28th to checkout some presale deals! They posted this on social media regarding the event:

*? Don't miss out on the sizzling HOTWORX Dartmouth Presale! ?*

- ?□ Mark your calendars for July 28th, as we bring the heat to Kohls Plaza from 8-8! ?
- ? Meet our team and see how you can unleash the power of infrared fitness and experience the future of workouts. ?
- ? Enjoy an exclusive offer of up to 50% off the regular

price! ?

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## Hotworx

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**Website:** [hotworx.net/studio/dartmouth](http://hotworx.net/studio/dartmouth)

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# Massachusetts DoH announces season's first West Nile virus-positive mosquito sample

“The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) announced that West Nile virus (WNV) has been detected in mosquitoes in Massachusetts for the first time this year.

The presence of WNV was confirmed by the Massachusetts State Public Health Laboratory in a mosquito sample collected July 6 in the town of Brookline in Norfolk County. No human or animal

cases of WNV or Eastern equine encephalitis (EEE) have been detected so far this year.

“We often find the first evidence of WNV in mosquitoes at about this time every year,” said Public Health Commissioner Robert Goldstein, MD, PhD. “We are asking people to start taking steps now to avoid mosquito bites. While WNV can cause serious illness, there are simple things that you can do to protect yourself and your loved ones.”

WNV is usually transmitted to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito. There were 10 human cases of WNV in 2022. While WNV can infect people of all ages, people over the age of 50 are at higher risk for severe disease. Most people infected with WNV will have no symptoms. When present, WNV symptoms tend to include fever and flu-like illness. In rare cases, more severe illness can occur.

“With the recent rain and the warmer weather, mosquito populations will increase and we will start to see more of them carrying WNV,” said Dr. Catherine M. Brown, State Epidemiologist. “Use a mosquito repellent with an EPA-registered ingredient, wear clothing to reduce exposed skin, drain standing water and repair window screens. We also encourage everyone to make it a habit to visit DPH’s mosquito-borne disease web pages so you know when and where WNV activity is occurring.”-Massachusetts Department of Health.

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## **MassDoT officials cut ribbon on “new, shining” mile of the**

# Mattapoisett Rail Trail

“Yesterday, MassDOT Secretary Gina Fiandaca and Highway Administrator Jonathan Gulliver helped cut the ribbon on the new shining tides mile of the Mattapoisett Rail Trail.

This \$6.6M project is part of the south coast bike network which connects the communities of Fairhaven, Mattapoisett, Town of Marion, Massachusetts & #Wareham.”-MassDOT.



*MassDOT photo.*





*MassDOT photo.*

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## **Massachusetts DEP issues Air Quality Advisory that is expected to have statewide impact**

“Due to smoke from Canadian wildfires that continue to influence our area, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) is issuing a statewide air quality alert effective from midnight, June 6, 2023, until midnight, June 7, 2023.

Smoke is expected to enter western sections of the state later tonight and spread eastward through much of the state during the overnight and early morning hours on Tuesday. Elevated levels are forecast to remain in the state for much of the day on Tuesday. Air quality is expected to be unhealthy for sensitive groups. Sensitive groups include people with heart or lung disease, such as asthma, older adults, children, teenagers, and people who are active outdoors. People with either lung disease or heart disease are at greater risk from exposure to ozone.

MassDEP is advising that people in sensitive groups should reduce prolonged or heavy outdoor exertion, take more breaks, do less intense activities, follow asthma action plans, and keep quick relief medicine handy. Watch for symptoms such as coughing or shortness of breath.

More details are available, including forecasts and real-time data, at MassDEP's MassAir Online site [here](#).

**WHEN:** Effective from midnight, June 6, 2023, until midnight, June 7, 2023.

MassDEP's mission is to protect and enhance the Commonwealth's natural resources – air, water and land – to provide for the health, safety and welfare of all people, and a clean and safe environment for future generations. In carrying out this mission, MassDEP commits to address and advance environmental justice and equity for all people of the Commonwealth, provide meaningful, inclusive opportunities for people to participate in agency decisions that affect their lives and ensure a diverse workforce that reflects the communities served by the agency."

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# Floating Hospital Eyed In Massachusetts Opioid Fight

By Sam Drysdale

State House News Service

Senators have a new idea to battle the opioid crisis: creating a recovery facility on a decommissioned ship.

Lawmakers have added a redrafted Sen. Nick Collins amendment (364) to their fiscal year 2024 budget, which approves a study to look into converting a decommissioned ship into The Floating Hospital for Mental Health, Substance Abuse and Recovery.

The Senate approved the study alongside 52 other amendments in a single voice vote on Wednesday night.

The converted “medical vessel” would offer services to respond to patients’ acute and chronic health needs, providing mental health, behavioral health, dental, primary and specialty care, according to Collins’ office, which said the vessel could be a cruise ship. It would also provide housing with wraparound services for those being treated on the ship.

The Department of Public Health study, if included the budget that will eventually emerge after House-Senate talks, would consult the Naval Construction and Marine Engineering program at MIT to look into the feasibility of the program.

Collins told senators on Thursday that the creative solution could help those living on the street in Boston’s Mass and Cass neighborhood, where frequent drug and mental health issues persist in encampments in the area.

“For years now, the situation at Mass & Cass and throughout our city and commonwealth have worsened without suitable state

intervention,” Collins said. “Now is the time to pursue new, creative ideas to address a humanitarian crisis affecting thousands of people and families throughout the area. The Floating Hospital would provide our health care professionals with a state-of-the-art facility in which to provide care, all while addressing the pressing public health and safety needs of the city.”

Collins added that there is a history of using floating hospitals in public health crises, such as when the U.S. Navy ran the U.S.N.S. Comfort as a medical vessel during the early days of the pandemic.

In 1894, Massachusetts doctors operated The Boston Floating Hospital to serve poor children on a boat floating in the Boston Harbor.

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## **South Coast's popular FREE Yoga & Summer Boot Camp classes return to Cushman Park**

“Fitness in Cushman Park is celebrating its twelfth year!

Fitness in the Park is scheduled FREE TO THE PUBLIC this summer for 10 weeks of Yoga and Exercise classes in Cushman Park, Green Street Fairhaven MA. The classes are taking place Tuesdays and Thursdays 8:30am from June 20 to August 24, 2023.



*Kripalu Certified Yoga Instructor, Jeff Costa. Fitness in Cushman Park photo.*

**TUESDAYS:** Yoga in the Park begins June 20 with certified yoga instructor, Jeff Costa, E-RYT 500. Yoga in the Park is a yoga series for all levels, designed to introduce newcomers to the basics of stretching and mindfulness and challenge yoga enthusiasts with a focus on compassion for the body.



*Certified personal trainer (A.F.P.A.), Wayne Goulart. Fitness in Cushman Park photo.*

**THURSDAYS:** Summer Bootcamp, begins June 22 with certified personal trainer (A.F.P.A.), Wayne Goulart. The Bootcamp class consists of various exercises that build functional strength and core stability with circuits utilizing light dumbbells and body weight exercises.

YOGA IN CUSHMAN PARK instructor, Jeff Costa, E-RYT 500 is a Yoga Alliance Nationally Certified Instructor and a graduate of the Kripalu School of Yoga and Health. Founder of Sangha New Bedford, a yoga studio and school in downtown New Bedford ([sanghanewbedford.com](http://sanghanewbedford.com)), Jeff is a recognized leader in the wellness industry and has over 30 years experience in fitness education with a BA in Liberal Arts from Boston University. The strength of Jeff's teaching lies in his attention to detail and his compassionate approach to students' needs. Jeff's authentic voice and classical approach to alignment create a class environment that promotes happiness, personal power, and peace of mind.

SUMMER BOOTCAMP instructor Wayne Goulart's career in health and wellness began as a hobby when he started lifting weights with his brother in the basement of his family home. That hobby grew into a lifestyle and eventually a passion. Wayne is



a certified personal trainer (A.F.P.A.) and teaches classes and offers personal training in his studio, Body by Wayne in New Bedford MA. A certified group exercise instructor, Wayne's specialty is functional training and his clients are from all walks of life, ages and fitness levels.



*Fitness in Cushman Park photo.*

Attendees to the classes should bring a mat for Yoga and a mat plus set of weights for Bootcamp. Classes take place weather permitting – cancellations will be posted on the Fitness in Cushman Park Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/fitnessincushmanpark](http://www.facebook.com/fitnessincushmanpark)

Fitness in Cushman Park is presented free to the public thanks to the generous support of our community sponsorship team. Fitness in Cushman Park is coordinated by Jeff Costa/SANGHA New Bedford and Susan Grace/EncorENTERTAINMENT.

For more information about Fitness in Cushman Park call 508-287-2482 or email [sgrace@encorent.com](mailto:sgrace@encorent.com) or

jeff@sanghanewbedford.com.

Please like and follow Fitness in Cushman Park's Facebook page to stay involved: [www.facebook.com/fitnessincushmanpark](http://www.facebook.com/fitnessincushmanpark)."



*Fitness in Cushman Park photo.*