

ELEVATE

NEWS FROM 2LIFE



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IN THIS ISSUE

Redefining advocacy for senior living in Massachusetts
Adding her voice: One resident's reason • Effective advocacy requires partnership
Advocacy and action at 2Life • Raising resident voices • News in Brief

Redefining advocacy for senior living in Massachusetts

As the growth of the senior population creates the biggest demographic shift in U.S. history, we have an amazing opportunity to benefit from the accumulated wisdom and experiences of older adults. To make the most of this moment, we must work through economic and societal barriers:

- Seniors in Massachusetts face the second-highest cost of living in the nation and rank last in elder economic security due to high housing costs.
- Disconnected systems for different kinds of supports often have conflicting eligibility requirements and are challenging to access, making it difficult to navigate the aging experience in America.
- Isolation and loneliness threaten seniors' physical and mental health.
- Disconnects between housing and healthcare, along with the economic challenges of aging, prematurely force many older adults into nursing homes.

In addition, we live in a culture that too often fails to recognize the extraordinary value older people can bring to our society. When seniors' needs are met, they will be more likely to make impactful contributions.

Since 1965, 2Life has been on a mission to provide high-quality affordable housing for seniors and create communities where residents can thrive. Our community model has demonstrated impact on creating an optimal aging pathway, but there is not enough housing like 2Life's, and it is too difficult to replicate on a larger scale without some big changes to public policy. It would take decades to clear 2Life's current waiting lists.

"It needs to be easier for others to do what we do," says 2Life CEO Amy Schectman. "Why doesn't every developer do it? It's expensive and hard, and the funding systems don't support it. So, we are working to take steps to make what 2Life is doing the norm, not the exception."

It takes a village: An inclusive approach

Transformational change requires a broad coalition of individuals and organizations who agree about what needs to change and share a commitment to dreaming big — together. And yet, systems operate in silos, each with its own challenges:

- Healthcare's reimbursement system rewards treatment and disincentivizes prevention.
- Homecare agencies face major staffing shortfalls.
- Housing subsidies are misaligned with existing income eligibilities for access to the support services that help keep seniors stably housed.



While place-based strategies that integrate the various programs have proven most efficient and effective, the disconnect between housing and all other supports makes cross-silo collaboration extremely difficult.

"There's power in diverse stakeholders with unique perspectives and experiences tackling complex issues side by side," says Emily Levine, 2Life's Chief of Advocacy. "There's growing awareness of challenges facing seniors, and genuine commitment from our local, state, and federal delegations to think more comprehensively about how to replicate 2Life's proven model. It's time to think bigger together to transform the aging experience into what it can and should be."

Last year, 2Life worked with the Healey-Driscoll Administration to draft language creating a senior housing commission charged with outlining policies, programs, and investments that would unlock the state's ability to expand the supply of affordable, service-enriched senior housing. The Administration incorporated the language into its transformative housing bond bill, which garnered widespread legislative support and was signed into law by Gov. Maura Healey in August.

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In advocating for the inclusion of the commission, 2Life organized a diverse group of stakeholders — from advocates to insurers and homecare providers who work with seniors across the state. Together, we all see the chance to coalesce around a shared set of goals, leveraging the power of place to create a road map and funding structure for developing more affordable housing with truly integrated services.

Amplifying senior voices

2Life’s approach also embraces the power of seniors’ lived experiences and perspectives. To help amplify residents’ voices, 2Life recently hosted the first in a continuing series of workshops to engage residents in our advocacy efforts and explore how their unique experiences can help drive meaningful change. Learn more about 2Life’s resident advocacy program on page 5.

The road ahead: 2Life’s advocacy priorities

Our priorities will always be centered around a commitment to ensuring all seniors have the opportunity to thrive. With partners and residents by our side — and our expertise in developing and managing housing — 2Life has robust plans to tackle urgent issues facing seniors.

Over the next two years, we will leverage the new commission on senior housing included in the Affordable Homes Act to identify critical eligibility gaps in access to housing, home care, and healthcare, and devise a road map for building more of the kind of service-enriched housing seniors deserve. We also will advocate at the state and federal levels to help make the primary tools for housing production work more effectively to meet the unique needs of seniors.

Key priorities include:

- Reforms to ensure the **Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program** — the most widely leveraged tool for the creation of affordable housing — more effectively responds to the economics of seniors.
- Continuing to organize in support of the next iteration of the Affordable Housing Credit Improvement Act in the 119th Congress.
- Advocating for increased and more senior-specific funding for the **Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP)**, which offers mobile- and project-based rental subsidies.
- Calling for needed investment in and reform of the **Section 202 Supportive Housing for the Elderly Program**, a federal program exclusively for nonprofit developers that funds both the development and the operation of deeply affordable supportive housing for low-income older adults.



**Adding her voice:
One resident’s reason**
CAROLYN JACKSON, 2LIFE RESIDENT

For Carolyn Jackson, finding safe, affordable housing was a harrowing journey. Helping others avoid that ordeal is her motivation for advocating for legislative progress.

“I was living in a horrible environment,” Carolyn recalls. “It took me about five years to get out of that situation. Cost was a huge consideration.”

She adds that finding her apartment at Brown Family House has been life-changing. “I feel truly blessed to be where I am.”

Carolyn is now lending her voice to help advocate for change. A member of the inaugural 2Life advocacy program cohort, Carolyn put her experience into words as part of a resident letter-writing campaign to legislators.

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I FEEL TRULY BLESSED TO BE WHERE I AM.

– CAROLYN JACKSON

“Numbers are important. Letters coming from groups are noticed more than individuals,” she says, noting that this type of activism is a new experience for her. “The response from policymakers was very quick because of how they received it and who it came from.”



Thoughts from Emily Levine,
2Life Chief of Advocacy:

Effective advocacy requires partnership

in the historic Affordable Homes Act. If we really aim to change the systems that address the problem and the opportunity, we must do so in coalition. That means engaging in a relentless effort to build relationships across sectors with organizations that care about seniors but don't usually think about housing production. By coming in with confidence in our expertise, the humility to know we do not have all the answers, and the acknowledgement that others are working hard to advance their definitions of justice for older adults, we are building a strong force for systems change.

Imagine a world where every older adult has the opportunity to live a full life of connection and purpose, where society values the wisdom and experience of older generations, and where innovative policies and programs that coalesce around the physical, emotional, and social well-being of seniors are the norm rather than the exception. It is a world in which the unprecedented growth in the number of seniors we are currently experiencing in Massachusetts and across the country is embraced as the opportunity it could be: a chance to set the stage for optimal aging for this and future generations.

And yet, the possibility of realizing this kind of future is currently hindered by existing barriers to achieving it — both for individual older adults and for the systems meant to support optimal aging:

- Nearly 300,000 Massachusetts seniors cannot afford to pay for essential living costs, such as housing, healthcare, and food. Housing is the biggest cost in most household budgets and drives Massachusetts to be the worst state for elder economic security. At 2Life alone, we have more than 8,900 households on our waiting list.
- The U.S. Surgeon General declared loneliness an epidemic in older adults, noting that it increases their risks of dementia, heart disease, stroke, and premature death. In 2023, one in three U.S. adults ages 50-80 (34%) reported feeling isolated from others in the past year.
- The current narrative often refers to the dramatically increasing number of seniors as a funding burden rather than acknowledging how much they have to offer.
- Policies and programs created decades ago have failed to keep up with our evolving understanding of the integrated needs of older adults.

At 2Life, seniors are seen, respected and, most of all, given the agency they deserve. Aging in community empowers residents to enjoy privacy in their homes and engage with others when they choose. By leveraging the power of place, we can efficiently provide a wide range of health and support services within our communities.

While we are working aggressively to increase our footprint and provide as many new opportunities for seniors to age in community as possible, we know our communities alone are not enough, and current funding systems make our model difficult to replicate. We also know that, while other organizations share our commitment to supporting optimal aging, they also face funding and regulatory barriers.



Our advocacy approach is driven by tenacity and relationships, and we are already seeing dramatic results. Just one example is the focused attention on the unique needs of seniors

YOU make it possible

Like a mosaic, 2Life is composed of many colorful facets, brought to life each day thanks to your generous support.

YOU play an essential role in building and nurturing our communities.

YOU support a rich array of programs and services.

YOU help empower 2Life residents to live full lives of connection and purpose.

Please make a tax-deductible gift
today at 2LifeCommunities.org/Mosaic.



Advocacy and action at 2Life



State Representative Tommy Vitolo visited Brown Family House, and spoke to residents about his work during the past legislative session. He also recapped priorities for the next session and answered just about every question imaginable.



A mighty group of residents at Brown Family House and Shillman House wrote more than 300 postcards to registered voters in Pennsylvania and Ohio, personally encouraging them to vote in the upcoming November election.



Massachusetts Secretary of Health and Human Services Kate Walsh visited the Olmsted Village site currently being developed in Mattapan. Pictured with Walsh and representatives from 2Life are our partners from the Treehouse Foundation and Boston Nature Center.



The Brighton campus hosted a voter registration party, and Mayor Wu paid a visit. Twenty residents were successfully registered to vote in time to participate in the September primary.



As part of our initiative to raise resident voices, 14 residents attended an advocacy training event at Coleman House. The group decided to work together to improve transportation for seniors in Newton.



2Life was named to the Senior Housing Commission established in the Massachusetts Affordable Homes Act. Gov. Maura Healey signed the new legislation at 2Life Communities' Golda Meir House on August 6.



Raising resident voices

“The most meaningful advocacy occurs when the people the work sets out to impact are sharing their own stories,” says Emily Levine, 2Life Chief of Advocacy. Emily explains that an important tenet of 2Life’s work to improve the systems that serve seniors is to include those very seniors in the work of changing the policy landscape.

“Seniors speak eloquently about issues like loneliness, affordability, and what living in community means to them,” she says. “They also identify the barriers they encountered prior to living in community.”

Education and engagement

2Life recently led a session at Brown Family House aimed at preparing residents to engage more directly in our organizational advocacy efforts. The session covered everything from what lobbying is (and is not) to current policies and statistics illustrating barriers to better serving older adults in Massachusetts. It also explored where residents’ stories fit in and provided a forum for residents to help guide 2Life’s advocacy agenda by identifying issues they are concerned and passionate about.

At the conclusion of the session, participants put what they learned to work, advocating for the passage of the Massachusetts Affordable Homes Act — legislation authorizing the largest investment in affordable housing in Massachusetts history. The legislation advances tools to produce significantly more housing, particularly for individuals and families with the lowest incomes. The bill also includes immediate policy initiatives to put housing dollars to work in the most meaningful and strategic ways. One of those initiatives is a senior housing commission tasked with recommending ways to produce significantly more service-enriched housing for seniors across the state.

“The residents wrote thoughtful notes to their legislators, telling their personal stories of how challenging it can be to find affordable housing,” says Emily. “They emphasized that all older adults deserve the experience and community life they have found at 2Life, and they doubled down on why a commission that focuses on the unique needs of seniors is vital. We’re now beginning to hold meetings between residents and their state legislators at each of our campuses to ensure their voices are heard on an ongoing basis.”

Participant perspectives

Carolyn Jackson, a resident at Brown Family House, is an enthusiastic participant in this program. “I believe it is important to give policymakers a more comprehensive picture of their constituents who fall under the median income requirements for good housing options,” she says. “I encourage others to get involved in this program because it’s informative, it provides a forum for asking questions, and there is strength in numbers.”

The program also facilitates employee advocacy, providing staff with updates on legislation impacting housing for older adults. Becky Keane, a resident services coordinator at Golda Meir House, says the program has sparked her passion for advocating for older adults.

“As people on the front lines, we believe in the 2Life model and in our ability to make an impact for older adults. I think it’s imperative for the employees to stand together and represent that. We’re louder as a unified front,” she says. “This new program makes it very easy for people who do not have experience in advocacy to support our ability to accomplish big things.”

Just the beginning

While the advocacy program is just getting started, it will be rolled out across all 2Life campuses, offering similar sessions at each through the end of the year. While the initial focus is on state policies, we look forward to opportunities beyond Massachusetts, helping residents take their passion to Washington, D.C.

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AS PEOPLE ON THE FRONT LINES, WE BELIEVE IN THE 2LIFE MODEL AND IN OUR ABILITY TO MAKE AN IMPACT FOR OLDER ADULTS.”

**— EMILY LEVINE,
2LIFE CHIEF OF ADVOCACY**

“The sky’s the limit,” Emily says. “There is a good deal of momentum at both the state and federal levels to make a meaningful impact to ensure that models like 2Life’s can be scaled broadly.” She further notes that 2Life is committed to partnering with other organizations to catalyze positive change beyond its own service area — a rarity in today’s fragmented senior housing marketplace.

Achieving meaningful legislative change is a long journey requiring partnership among all stakeholders, including residents and those who work with them. “Leveraging the voice of older adults must be grounded in a belief that their voice really matters,” says Emily. “We partner with others who share that belief.”

2Life News in Brief



2Life hosts signing for landmark housing bond bill

On August 6, 2Life Communities' Golda Meir House in Newton proudly hosted more than 300 people to celebrate the signing of the Affordable Homes Act by Gov. Maura Healey. The largest housing bond bill ever passed in Massachusetts history will spur the creation and preservation of affordable housing throughout the Commonwealth in the years ahead.



Rep. Moulton tours PACE Center in Lynn

On August 26, 2Life welcomed U.S. Rep. Seth Moulton (MA-6) for a tour of the Element Care PACE (Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly) Center in Lynn. Earlier this year, Rep. Moulton helped us secure \$1 million in federal funding to support the construction of the Village Center at Solimine House. Set to be completed in 2027, Solimine House will feature 150 affordable apartments for older adults and will be located next to the PACE Center.



2Life Community Plaza gets a sound boost

2Life is deeply grateful to the George B. Henderson Foundation for their generous support of our innovative, multipurpose Community Gathering Plaza on Chestnut Hill Avenue in Brighton. Their gift made it possible to install large-scale therapeutic musical instruments, which will provide enjoyment for 2Life residents as well as the surrounding community.

Boston Business Journal names Amy Schectman to 2024 Power 50

Amy Schectman, 2Life Communities Saul and Gitta Kurlat Chief Executive Officer, made the Boston Business Journal's 2024 Power 50 list. The list represents "those in the Greater Boston business community who are taking a stand, creating change, and taking actionable steps to work together to make Boston continue to grow as a place for equity, inclusion and diverse points of view."



2Life welcomes Andrew Goshert as Deputy Chief of Nahanton Campus

2Life Communities has appointed Andrew Goshert as Deputy Chief of its Nahanton Campus in Newton, Massachusetts. Goshert, a seasoned senior living management professional, will oversee the integration and operation of two distinct communities within the campus: Coleman House and Opus Newton.

Coleman House is a well-established affordable housing community offering 144 apartments. Opus Newton, an innovative development by 2Life, will add 174 apartments — making community living more accessible for older adults. Goshert will spearhead the official opening of Opus Newton in 2025.



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