

Report: Human services sector's growth felt in economy

BY **CAROL MCDONALD**

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A new report says jobs in the Massachusetts human services sector grew almost 48 percent between 2003 and 2011.

The study, by the University of Massachusetts' Donahue Institute and UMass Dartmouth, also says disposable income earned by the sector's 145,000-member workforce had a total economic impact of \$3.4 billion in 2011.

The Providers' Council, a statewide association for community-based organizations, commissioned the report. David Jordan, president and CEO of Seven Hills Foundation in Worcester, is chairman of the Providers' Council committee that oversaw the report's development.

"While the social benefits of the sector that provides critical care to one in ten Massachusetts residents are well known, the sector's significant economic impact on the Commonwealth had not been quantified until this report," said a statement Wednesday from the Providers' Council.

The report, "Beyond Social Value: The Economic Impact of the Human Services Sector," was released Wednesday at a Statehouse briefing. Among its findings: The human services sector's 145,000 jobs represent 5 percent of the state's nearly 3 million jobs; and the sector grew more than expected during the period covered.

Providers' Council president and CEO Michael Weekes said in the statement: "In this win-win situation, our human services sector's mission-driven objective for strengthening the society's safety net also enhances our communities by significantly creating jobs and supporting local businesses."

Human services spending in the state budget dropped from 11.8 percent in fiscal 2003 to 9.8 percent in fiscal 2014, the report says.

It also notes that, among industries in the state, the human services sector employs the highest percentage — 6.5 percent — of people with a disability.