

# MASSACHUSETTS ASSOCIATION for the **Blind and Visually Impaired**

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## **Massachusetts Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired Receives First Grant Award from the Cummings Foundation**

*Funding builds capacity to support a growing population of older adults with visual disabilities*

Brookline, MA, May 24, 2024 – The Massachusetts Association for the Blind and Visually (MABVI), a division of MAB Community Services, is proud to announce our first grant award from the Cummings Foundation. MABVI is one of 150 local nonprofits that will share in \$30 million through the Cummings Foundation’s major annual grants program. MABVI was selected from 715 applicants during a competitive review process. MABVI will receive a three-year grant totaling \$225,000 to build capacity and expand services for older adults with visual disabilities, who are the fastest growing segment of the blind and low vision community.

Founded in 1903, MABVI is one of the oldest social service organizations in the U.S. dedicated to supporting adults with visual disabilities. Helen Keller, an early leader of MABVI, laid the foundation for the organization’s commitment to promoting independence and self-determination for visually impaired adults. Today, MABVI’s services include in-home vision rehabilitation occupational therapy, orientation and mobility training, peer empowerment groups, volunteer support, access to low vision centers, adjustment to vision loss counseling, and access technology training.

MABVI annually serves more than 1,200 older adults including more than 700 people who live in Cummings communities. The Cummings Foundation’s grant will invest in MABVI’s staffing, access technology, and professional development, as well as improved data management systems and program evaluation.

Led by professionals with lived experience of blindness and low vision, MABVI’s array of community-based and virtual services uniquely and effectively support independence. MABVI’s staff teach consumers strategies for doing the activities they may have previously relied on vision to accomplish.

While many of MABVI’s services are offered to consumers at no charge, they are not free. More than half of MABVI’s annual budget relies on support from individual and institutional donors, including the Cummings Foundation.

“This generous investment will help MABVI serve more older adults in Cummings communities,” said MABVI Acting Executive Director Cynthia Canham. “We’re grateful to everyone at the Cummings Foundation and excited to build capacity and help more people with visual disabilities live healthier, safer, and more independent lives.”

The Cummings \$30 Million Grant Program primarily supports Massachusetts nonprofits that are based in and serve Middlesex, Essex, and Suffolk counties, plus six communities in Norfolk County: Brookline, Dedham, Milton, Needham, Quincy, and Wellesley.

Through this place-based initiative, the Cummings Foundation aims to give back in the areas where it owns commercial property. Its buildings are all managed, at no cost to the Foundation, by its affiliate, Cummings Properties. This Woburn-based commercial real estate firm leases and manages 11 million square feet of debt-free space, the majority of which exclusively benefits the Foundation.

“Greater Boston is fortunate to have a robust, dedicated, and highly capable nonprofit sector that supports and enhances the community in myriad ways,” said Cummings Foundation executive director and trustee Joyce Vyriotes. “The entire Cummings organization is thankful for their daily work to help all our neighbors thrive.”

The majority of the grant decisions were made by nearly 100 community volunteers. They worked across a variety of committees to review and discuss the proposals and then, together, determine which requests would be funded. Among these community volunteers were business and nonprofit leaders, mayors, college presidents, and experts in areas such as finance and DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion).

“We believe strongly that grant decisions will be more equitable when made by a diverse group of community members,” said Vyriotes. “We’re incredibly grateful to the dozens of individuals who participated in our democratized philanthropic process.”

The Foundation and volunteers first identified 150 organizations to receive three-year grants of up to \$300,000 each. The winners included first-time recipients as well as nonprofits that had previously received Cummings grants. Twenty-five of this latter group of repeat recipients were then selected by a panel of community volunteers to have their grants elevated to 10-year awards ranging from \$300,000 to \$1 million each.

This year’s grant recipients represent a wide variety of causes, including housing and food insecurity, workforce development, immigrant services, social justice, education, and mental health services. The nonprofits are spread across 49 different cities and towns.

The Cummings Foundation has now awarded \$500 million to greater Boston nonprofits. The complete list of this year’s 150 grant winners, plus nearly 2,000 previous recipients, is available at [www.CummingsFoundation.org](http://www.CummingsFoundation.org).

### **About the Massachusetts Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (MABVI)**

MABVI is a division of MAB Community Services (MAB), a statewide nonprofit organization headquartered in Brookline, MA that helps people who live with a variety of disabilities to enjoy full and satisfying lives. Founded in 1903, MABVI is one of the oldest social service organizations in the U.S. dedicated to supporting adults in the blind and low vision community. MABVI collaborates with community and medical groups, as well as hundreds of generous volunteers and donors to annually serve more than 1,200 people. To learn more about the support that MABVI offers, call (888) 613-2777, email [mabvi@mabcommunity.org](mailto:mabvi@mabcommunity.org), or visit [www.mabvi.org](http://www.mabvi.org).

### **About the Cummings Foundation**

The Woburn-based Cummings Foundation, Inc. was established in 1986 by Joyce and Bill Cummings of Winchester, MA and has grown to be one of the largest private foundations in New England. The Foundation directly operates its own charitable subsidiaries, including New Horizons retirement communities in Marlborough and Woburn and Cummings Health Sciences, LLC. Additional information is available at [www.CummingsFoundation.org](http://www.CummingsFoundation.org).