



---

# UU MASS ACTION FY22 ANNUAL REPORT

---

July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022

## Note from our Executive Director:

FY22, A Year of change, transitions, and newness!

Our work is more important than ever. We've kicked off new programming, expanded the work of our campaigns with some key victories, and continue to transition to the next chapter of our organization. We would not have accomplished separately what we have accomplished together. We are grateful to all of you for your energy, commitment and generosity that help us continue to show up for our partners in our work for justice.

Thank you!



*Rev. Jo Murphy, Executive Director*

---

Our staff and capacity to organize & mobilize, is growing - thanks to your generous support!

---

## Meet our Staff and Board



Cassandra Bensahih (She/Her), Senior Organizer and statewide coordinator for our Massachusetts Against Solitary Confinement campaign. Solitary Reform is in the 2018 Criminal Justice Reform Act and yet, very few of the mandates have yet to be implemented. Worse, solitary has increased during the pandemic which has been used as an excuse to turn prisons and jails into institution-wide solitary units. UU Mass Action's campaign to end solitary is one of the national UnLock the Box

Coalition's 16 priority campaigns that are working to the end the torture of solitary confinement in their state. Cassandra has developed a leadership team of solitary survivors for this campaign, she is a member of the National Council for Incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women and girls and was invited to join the MA Executive Office of Public Safety and Security's Lived Experience Working Group.



Tali Smookler (She/Her), Congregational Organizing Director, has transitioned from focusing on climate justice to leading our Immigration Justice, Economic Justice, and Youth Corps campaigns, as well as supporting our base building strategy. She builds relationships with congregational leaders and works to develop their leadership and engage them in our statewide campaigns. Tali has dedicated her professional work to strengthening the capacity of the Jewish community to work for a more just world. Tali's passion for organizing began during the summer of 2010, when she participated in a program where she traveled across Massachusetts by bicycle with four other students to support communities working with the climate movement. After graduation, Tali worked with the Repair the World Fellowship creating the Philly Farm Crew, a program which creates volunteer and educational opportunities on urban farms. Most recently, she worked and continues to work at JOIN for Justice which trains the Jewish community in social justice and organizing skills.



Claire Karl Müller (They/Them) As our Movement Builder Director, Claire Karl strengthens our congregational organizing and our coalition development as we build the necessary power to achieve our justice and equity goals. For nearly 10 years, they worked at Community Action Works (formerly known as Toxics Action Center) as the Lead Community Organizer and Climate Justice Director. Claire Karl is a founder and co-coordinator of the statewide coalition Mass Power Forward, working to further climate justice policy and foster local clean energy campaigns. Claire graduated from Oberlin College, majoring in Environmental Studies with minors in Politics and East Asian Studies. Claire is a force of nature!



Rev. Jo Murphy, Executive Director, oversees all our campaigns, congregational organizing and leadership development efforts. She joined our team almost a year ago in November and has been working on new programming such as the Youth Corps and our Congregational Partnership. Our team works collaboratively as we build the power to achieve our goals. She is a member of the leadership team for the Safe Communities Act and has worked to strengthen our relationship with BIJAN (The Boston Immigration Justice Accompaniment Network). Jo greatly enjoyed jumping right into the work of UU Mass Action and especially loves carving our small moments for joy and the chance to step into a pulpit and preach on justice.

## UU Mass Action Board Members

UU Mass Action has a volunteer board. Members commit to a three-year term and may serve two terms. We are very grateful for our board members, without whom we could not function as a non-profit organization. Thank you!

Name	Role	Member Since	Term Ends	No. of Terms
Diane Nassif	President	2018	2024	2nd
Sheila Murphy	Treasurer	2021	2024	1st
Donna Saviki	Clerk	2021	2024	1st
Jessica Clay	Member	2021	2024	1st
John Metzger	Member	2019	2025	2nd
Karen Martin	Member	2019	2025	2d
Elizabeth Ide	Member	2022	2025	1st

## UU Mass Action History

UU Mass Action was founded in 2005. We are one of 26 UU State Action Networks nationwide. As one of the original UU State Action Networks formed, our founders received a grant from UUSC and our first campaign was the fight for equal marriage.



We began with a part-time Executive Director (Nancy Banks), a \$10,000 budget, and a volunteer board. Our second part-time Director (Jesse Jaeger) grew our organization and established our early relationships with coalitions working on immigrant and economic justice. Laura Wagner led UU Mass Action for the past 7 years. When she began, her position was part-time, she had one part-time administrative staff and a budget of \$65,000. Since that time, Laura worked to build our relationship with UU congregations and worked to strengthen our collective organizing power. She became a full-time Director in 2018 and was joined by three full-time staff.

Our current Executive Director, Rev. Jo Murphy, joined UU Mass Action just last November and is excited to continue growing our robust network and organization. Our staff are leaders or members

of coalitions and organizations that support our five core issue areas. We have relationships and connections with approximately 110 of the 142 congregations in Massachusetts. Our FY22 budget is \$321,000

---

## Mission, Vision and Theory of Change

**Mission:** To organize and mobilize UUs in Massachusetts to confront oppression. We provide pathways towards justice and identify opportunities in which we can live our values.

**Vision:** Creating a world where all people are honored and valued.

A note on the 8th Principle/Racial Justice: All our work is grounded in racial justice and we both build relationships with *and* center the leadership of those who are most impacted by forms of oppression and injustice. UU Mass Action is also proud to be one of the many UU entities to have adopted the 8th principle. We stand with many of our fellow Unitarian Universalists and congregations to "covenant to affirm and promote: journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions." [More information on the 8th Principle](#)

---

## Our Campaigns

At UU Mass Action, our legislative campaigns follow the two-year legislative cycle. We typically commit to our non-legislative campaigns during this same time frame, depending on what the moment calls for. An example of this non-legislative work is our engagement in Immigrant Justice Accompaniment Networks.

This past July, we finished a two year legislative session, showing up at the state house to rally and demand change in our issues areas of economic justice, climate and environmental justice, indigenous solidarity justice, decarceration, and immigration justice.

Successes from our campaigns include:

*Legislative Successes*

- ✓ The passage of the Family Work and Mobility Act
- ✓ The passage of the Massachusetts Climate Bill
- ✓ Joined efforts for the Fair Trade Amendment Coalition with Raise up Mass
- ✓ Hosted our annual UU Advocacy Day with over 50 participants and meetings

*Organization Successes*

- ✓ We grew our grassroots membership as well as for congregational engagement.
- ✓ We created a UU Immigration Justice team and restructured our climate justice team
- ✓ We hosted the ‘Broken Hearts’ action, bringing together various coalitions to put pressure on the legislature in various issue areas including: indigenous justice, climate, immigration, and housing
- ✓ We led monthly UU Action Hours and co-hosted Action Hours with many of our partners
- ✓ We held our first UU Youth Corps event ‘S’more Justice’
- ✓ We launched our Congregational Partnership Covenant program for congregations to officially partner with us in a more structured way
- ✓ We launched an Indigenous issues team
- ✓ We began a new partnership with Homes for All
- ✓ We celebrated Laura leaving and on-boarding Rev Jo as the new executive Director

## Environmental and Climate Justice

Coalition: [Mass Power Forward](#)

This past year was exciting for our climate justice solidarity work. We continued our work with Mass Power Forward working on the climate bill through our legislative priorities (more information about [legislative priorities](#)).



We won a major victory with the passage of our climate bill with the coalition. We celebrate that the burning of trees (woody biomass) will no longer be considered renewable and therefore no longer be incentivized. This is important not only for the climate, but also for clean air and our forests.

We continued to host our Climate Leadership Team into its third year. Within the team, we continued to learn about racial justice and systems of oppression in the climate movement. We had a

team goal for recruiting for UU Advocacy Day and recruited around a third of our Advocacy Day participants.

Our staff and leaders played a critical role in end of the session pressure. We were primary organizers in rallies throughout the state, sing-ins at the climate, and co-creating action guides for simultaneous online action. This steady drumbeat of pressure was essential to convincing our decision-makers to act.

---

## Immigrant Justice

UU Mass Action supports both legislative immigrant justice work, as well as accompaniment efforts (such as with Boston Immigrant Justice Accompaniment Network -BIJAN).

Our legislation this session included:

- [No Cost Calls bill](#): This bill would eliminate costs for those incarcerated or detained to contact loved ones, lawyers, or others from prison. While this was incredibly close to passing, it did not make it across the finish line in the 11th hour of the session. We are working this fall to push it forward before the next session.
- [Driver's License Bill](#): After nearly 20 years of advocacy, we celebrated passing this bill that would allow anyone to get a driver's license regardless of immigration status. (Unfortunately opposition worked to repeal this on the November ballot, but we continued to fight and protected this victory!).
- [Safe Communities Act](#): UU Mass Action is a member of the leadership team for the Safe Communities Coalition. This session marks the fifth session in which we have worked to pass this bill, which calls for equal treatment for immigrants under the law.



Other highlights from our Immigration Justice work:

- We launched our UU Immigration Justice team this spring in order to build power and connection, and share opportunities, to strengthen our immigration justice work.

- We bottom lined the “No Digital Prisons” action as part of a national campaign to show up against ICE surveillance and monitoring, which is becoming all too common.
- We continued to supported BIJAN (Boston Immigration Justice and Accompaniment Network) in fundraising, providing rides, accompanying to court cases, and more.



M A  
S C

MASSACHUSETTS AGAINST  
SOLITARY CONFINEMENT

## Decarceration & End Solitary Confinement

Our long term dream is the abolition of prisons. No human being should be held in a cage. We believe that with proper investment in our communities’ social network, investment in living wage jobs, truly affordable housing, medical and mental health care, child care, education, transportation and community safety protections that don’t include militarized police, prisons will no longer be needed.

UU Mass Action’s primary organizing coalition is [Massachusetts Against Solitary Confinement Coalition \(MASC\)](#). Our lead coalition partners include [Black & Pink Massachusetts](#), [Families for Justice as Healing](#), [Prisoners’ Legal Services](#) and our [National Partner, National Religious Coalition Against Torture \(UnLock the Box\)](#). An integral part of this campaign is to build relationships with survivors of solitary and invite them to the leadership team. Centering the voices of survivors is central to our work. Our legislative priorities this session included:

- Criminal Justice Protections to all Prisoners in Segregated Confinement
- Ensure the Constitutional rights and Human Dignity of Prisoners on Mental Health Watch
- An Act establishing a jail and prison construction moratorium.

Unfortunately, The Criminal Justice Protections to all Prisoners in Segregated Confinement Ensure the Constitutional Rights remains stuck in Committee, but we are in the process of collaborating with the coalition and specifically Prisoner Legal Services to draw up a new bill for next session. We continue to push for the other two pieces of legislation as well as continue to strengthen our clergy network and fight for the end of all prisons through action and abolition education. The MASC campaign’s strength centers on the lived experience of those who survived solitary confinement, those who are formerly incarcerated, or as a person with a loved one who is currently incarcerated. Telling one’s story on multiple, public occasions is very difficult and often retraumatizing. To make sure our



campaign offers as much support as possible to our leaders, we partnered with Sam Williams, founder of [One Circle Health and Wellness](#).

---

## Indigenous Justice

UU Mass Action is committed to honoring the sovereignty of First Nations, Indigenous, Native and Tribal peoples. We support the MA Indigenous Legislative Agenda through our partners at [United American Indians of New England](#) and [North American Indian Center of Boston](#).



### Indigenous Justice Legislation ([Fact Sheet](#), 5 bills)

- Prohibit Native American Mascots by Public Schools ([S.2493](#)) [Fact Sheet](#)  
Status: favorably voted out of the Joint Committee on Education and is now in the Senate Ways & Means Committee
- Indigenous People's Day ([S.2027/H.3191](#)) Status: Joint Committee on State Administration *Awaiting Hearing*
- An Act Relative to Celebrating and Teaching Native American Culture & History ([S.382/H.651](#)) Status: Joint Committee on Education *Awaiting Hearing*
- Protect Native American Heritage ([S.2239/H.3377](#)) Status: Joint Committee on Tourism & Arts *Awaiting Hearing*
- Protect Native American Heritage ([S.2240/H.3385](#)) Status: Joint Committee on Tourism & Arts *Awaiting Hearing*
- The Creation of a Permanent Commission Relative to the Education of American Indians and Alaska Native Residents of the Commonwealth, ([H.582](#)) Status: Joint Committee: Education

The Indigenous Justice Solidarity team met monthly this year to deepen our understanding of Indigenous Solidarity, build power together for the policy priorities, and win victories. Some of our priority policies moved further than they ever have before, though none to become law. Our staff and team provided key organizational support to our partners and will continue to do so in the coming year.

---

## Economic Justice

Our main legislative partner in economic justice work is Raise Up MA. This year, we began to deepen a partnership with Homes for All MA as well, and are looking forward to expanding about this in the future.



Some highlights from our economic justice work this year:

- UU Mass Action continued to represent UU congregations on the Anchor Institution Team of the Boston Ujima Project, an ecosystem centered in working-class, Black and Brown neighborhoods and rooted in community ownership, democratic decision making, and reimagining our economy. Several UU congregations have engaged regularly in this partnership, both in joining weekly Wednesday calls as well as ‘share the plate’ and other donations. UUMA stepped back from the core team this spring as we re-evaluate our campaigns, but remains committed to supporting their work.
- We continued to support the Fair Share Amendment on the November ballot that increase taxes for people making over \$1 million a year to help fund education and transportation. Several congregations have been involved this past year as well in previous years. (We celebrated our victory recently!)
- We deepened our partnership with Homes for All MA, a housing justice organization. We support their campaigns through our climate work, and as we’ve built stronger relationships, this partnership has begun to grow and expand. We specifically worked to build power in a strategic legislative district, engaging congregations to host rallies, send a collectively signed letter to their legislator, hold a meeting, and more, in solidarity with HFA MA. We look forward to expanding this partnership and exploring if it might be more central to our economic justice work.

---

## Certified working groups

Certified working groups are developing efforts that are emerging or project oriented and supported by at least three congregations who are also working with a state partner.

## Black Lives Matter

Mission: To share experiences and provide support for our congregations' deeper engagement in supporting Black Lives



We have felt many benefits from sharing our experiences about how our racial justice work is evolving at our various congregations. The purpose of this CWG is to continue to network among ourselves-as well as to share experiences going forward as we reach out to more potential allies in our local communities.

We have been meeting quarterly for over four years in various UU congregations around the state and now virtually. Our email group currently has over 100 members. We commit to both personal education and growth as well as creating opportunities for education and to support the work in our congregations. The Black Lives Matter Working Group collectively supports the [following potentially allied organizations](#). The BLM group has also been working on the 8th principle and continues to host discussion about how churches can both adopt the principle and take action once it has been adopted.

As our group has grown so much in recent years, we have restructured our meetings to include UU Mass Action staff more regularly, and spend more time in discussion breakout groups based on interest areas.

---

## Medical Aid in Dying

Legislation to authorize medical aid in dying had been introduced nine times since 1995 and has never advanced out of the Committee on Public Health. We continue to support this legislation, [S.1384/H.2381](#) Medical Aid in Dying ([Fact Sheet](#)), this legislation did not get voted on this session and will be brought back up next session. Our current group consists of representatives from the UU Fellowship of Falmouth headed by Cathy Kligler, the UU Society of Rockport headed by Chuck Francis and the UU Society of Wellesley Hills headed by Molly Walsh.



---

## Building our Base

This year, as we expanded our ways to deepen our engagement with UUs across the state to support our campaigns, we worked to build our base. “Base building” for grassroots organizers means building the ways that we are able to recruit, train, mobilize, activate, and build relationships with our base or members, which are UUs in MA. We expanded our work in this area in a few ways this year.

This year, we continued our work with our recently launched six UU Regional Action teams that meet monthly as a way to build the power we need to have an impact on the issues we care about. Monthly meetings take place on zoom (this Fall we shifted instead to monthly All Network Meetings with Regional Breakouts instead). These monthly meetings are one of the best ways to learn what we are up to, meet other leaders in your area, and share resources and opportunities both between congregations and with UU Mass Action. Learn more [here](#).



The image above is our framework for these teams; UU Mass Action and these teams are the “rivers” that work to connect individuals and congregations to larger movements, so we are able to be part of the big, powerful wave of change.

Our teams include:

- Worcester County
- Berkshires and Western MA
- Metrowest
- Boston Area
- North Shore/Merrimack Valley
- Southeastern MA

Learn more [here](#).

---

## Action Hours

We continue to host our monthly virtual UU Action Hours (which began in January 2021). This gathering is an opportunity to hear updates about all our campaigns and take action together, such as calling your legislators, signing petitions, and more to support our frontline and coalition partners. We focus on our key issues areas: climate justice, immigrant justice, criminal law reform, Indigenous Legislative Agenda, and economic justice, with the goal of amplifying our partner's current calls to action. We know that we send out a lot of opportunities to take action each week, and hope this can be one structure to support each other in staying accountable to showing up to these campaigns. We walk participants through each action, give context about why these actions are important, celebrate any victories, and are available to support any questions. We've engaged over 150 UUs and others in action hours since we launched.

This year, we additionally partnered with the organizations that host a monthly Abolition Action Hour as a way to connect with other organizations doing similar work, and support our mutual Action Hour work.

---

## UU [Youth Corps](#)

In spring 2022, UU Mass Action laid the foundation to launch our upcoming UU Youth Corps. We have identified three congregations who plan to be involved in our pilot year: Belmont, Bedford, and Concord. We kicked off with our first event last spring, "Smores Justice", with a bonfire, smores, and learning about organizing and making video for UU priority campaigns together.

The goal of this Corps is to both provide youth with meaningful opportunities to engage and learn about justice work as it relates to their UU and other values, as well as to bring new energy to our

campaigns. This fall we will host a few events aimed to build momentum and identify youth who want to be part of the corps. Beginning this winter, we will kick off the Corps that will meet to learn about justice, oppression, organizing, and issue areas together; to build relationships; and to create action opportunities to engage other youth from their congregations in our justice campaigns. We aim to identify one key issue to go deeper into as the Corps.

---

## Advocacy Days

We've continued to offer Advocacy Days as a way to engage our members on all our campaigns.

UU Advocacy Day: We offered our third UU Virtual Advocacy Day this past April 2022, engaging 130 UUs in 60 meetings with their Representatives and Senators, advocating for our priority bills we are supporting. This Advocacy Day was prefaced by two trainings where we talked about organizing as a whole as well as legislative organizing and our priorities last session. We honored musician Alex Fam with the [Ruth Rowan Award](#), and two of our active climate team members Demie Stathoplos and Alan Linov with the [Lynn Holbein award](#).

This year's Advocacy Day included a special Climate Action Hour hosted by Massachusetts Renews Alliance and Mass Power Forward. Also included was a time for rhyming intentions! Take a look [here](#) at the poetry that came out of Advocacy Day this year.

---

## Financial Overview

UU Mass Action is grateful for the financial support of individual and congregational supporters, as well as for the support we have received from grant foundations. We are an independent 501c3 non-profit organization. Our work would not be possible without you!

## Outgoing Director Fundraiser:

This year we raised over \$150k as part of our fundraiser to celebrate the departure of outgoing Director Laura Wagner, and incoming Director Rev. Jo Murphy.

## FY22 Foundation Grants

*(Note: while we apply for grants through the UU Funding Panel, we do not receive grants from the UUA)*

- National Religious Campaign Against Against Torture, \$50,000
- Community Action Works, Fund for the Public Interest, \$25,000
- UU Funding Program, Indigenous Solidarity \$10,000
- Epsicopal City Mission Partners, \$20,000
- Wild Geese Foundation, \$5,000
- Alice Rowan Swanson Foundation, \$2,000
- Spinney Mudge Foundation UU Church of Greater Lynn in Swampscott, \$1,000
- Winchester Unitarian Society, \$1,000

