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THE SUN

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IMMIGRATION

Afghan man living in Lowell speaks about ICE detention

By Peter Currier
pcurrier@lowellsun.com

LOWELL » When Ihsanullah Garay was delivering food on Sept. 14, he found himself struggling to find the Starbucks he was being sent to pick up from in Methuen.

He asked the first people he saw for directions, a man and a woman sitting in a car. The man

pointed Garay in the right direction, he told The Sun Monday morning, and Garay thanked him and started walking away. Then, the two people started asking Garay questions about his nationality, and where he was born. Garay is from Afghanistan, arriving in the U.S. in the spring of 2021 on a student visa to get a doctorate in finance.

“I said, ‘Brother, this is not related to you. You helped me, I said thank you, that’s it,’” Garay said.

Garay then tried to walk away, but he said the man shouted at him, and continued questioning Garay’s nationality, while Garay maintained that he was in the country legally.



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Afghan cousins Ihsanullah Garay, left, and Abdul Ahad Storay outside Storay’s computer shop in Lowell Nov. 10, 2025. Garay recently returned from more than a month in U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement custody, during which he was moved to three different facilities in three different states, and suffered numerous medical episodes stemming from his brain cancer.

GARAY » PAGE 11

HOMELESS YOUTH AWARENESS MONTH

‘EMPOWERMENT TO TAKE CONTROL OF THEIR OWN LIVES’



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Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services Secretary Kiame Mahaniah, left, and Community Teamwork CEO Carl Howell during a roundtable discussion about youth homelessness on Nov. 13, 2025 in recognition of Homeless Youth Awareness Month.

EOHHS secretary’s visit highlights CTI’s Youth Services Program

By Peter Currier
pcurrier@lowellsun.com

LOWELL » State Executive Office of Housing and Human Services Secretary Kiame Mahaniah visited Community Teamwork Inc.’s Youth Services Program Thursday evening in recognition of Homeless Youth Awareness Month.

CTI CEO Carl Howard told a roundtable with Mahaniah and other local officials the origins of CTI’s Youth Services Program can be traced to a mandatory community needs assessment

the nonprofit undergoes every two years. In 2015, Howell said one such assessment was conducted which found rising rates of homelessness and housing insecurity among young adults in areas served by CTI.

The program was formally launched in 2018, and has since grown from just three staff to now over 30. Parts of CTI’s building at 167 Dutton St. were built out to support the program, including The Mill You, a space young adults ages 16 to



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From left, Community Teamwork Youth Advisory Board members Shantel Wilkerson and Edmira Kabia with CTI Youth Services staff member Nyla Ojeda Nov. 13, 2025 during a roundtable discussion with local and state officials about youth homelessness during Homeless Youth Awareness Month.

CTI » PAGE 12

FEDERAL CHARGES

Tewksbury man indicted for possessing images of child sex abuse

52-year-old allegedly shared illicit files via Telegram

By Aaron Curtis
acurtis@lowellsun.com

BOSTON » Federal prosecutors announced that a Tewksbury man has been indicted on charges alleging he distributed and possessed child sexual abuse images, including material involving children as young as 5 to 7 years old.

U.S. Attorney Leah Foley’s office said Brian McCarthy, 52, was taken into custody at his home last month, following a criminal complaint. He was indicted by a federal grand jury on Nov. 4 on one count each of distribution of child pornography, possession of child pornography, and receipt of child pornography.

According to a charging document filed by a Homeland Security Investigations special agent, federal authorities executed search warrants at McCarthy’s Tewksbury residence on Oct. 7.

McCarthy agreed to speak with investigators and signed a written waiver of his Miranda rights. During the interview, he allegedly admitted to sharing child sexual abuse material on Telegram, a messaging application, as well as on other platforms. He also provided agents with passcodes to his phone and computer.

The documents state that the investigation allegedly found that on Oct. 6, McCarthy sent a user 10 video files that appeared to depict child sexual abuse material, including at least two involving children between the ages of 5 and 7.

In one message in a chat, McCarthy allegedly wrote, “Love boys that know what they’re doing.”

The following day, prosecutors said he was found in possession of additional illicit files.

INDICTED » PAGE 12

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CTI

FROM PAGE 1

24 can use to access basic needs like showers, laundry, basic hygiene items, snacks and a kitchen.

Howell also highlighted the Youth Action Board, which is made up of young adults who have experienced homelessness or housing insecurity who come together to talk about the barriers they faced in gaining housing stability and to raise awareness of homelessness among youth and young adults.

"I feel when I've been in those conversations or attended YAB meetings, it is just a place to really give the youth a platform to express their concerns or needs and make them aware of policy happening in the community they can help shape," said Howell.

Mahaniah said he has always been interested in programs like those offered by CTI that "give the people they are serving the agency and empowerment to take control of their own lives." He is visiting organizations like CTI, he said, to get a sense of the human stories behind EOHHS line items in its \$30 billion budget.

"I think it is very important to reach decision-makers in a very real way so they can know what that line means," said Mahaniah. "The need is always more than what the funds are, so I think it's important we find a way to make sure the outcome of that funding is known."

"One of the weak points of government is we don't necessarily measure outcome, we are very pro-

cess oriented. How many people did we serve? How many communities did we give money to?" Mahaniah said later. "As opposed to thinking, 'This program means that 20, 50, 100 young women are going to be independent and building their own families as active members of this community.'"

Youth Services Director Nick DiGiammo has been involved with the program for the last six years, and was one of the three original staff members. DiGiammo praised EOHHS for the department's funding support over the years.

"I think one of the things EOHHS funding helps us do ... is really take what is needed for the people who need it and put it into action, not only as a provider but alongside the folks who are receiving these services," said DiGiammo.

"We have over 30 communities just with these grants alone that are supported by these funds, and it is really important for our team to reach and everybody in those communities who can benefit from that support," DiGiammo said later.

To date, CTI's Youth Services Program has served more than 1,300 young adults, DiGiammo said.

YAB member Shantel Wilkerson said she became involved with CTI after she was kicked out of her housing at the age of 19. She was able to use CTI's services, but she soon found out she was pregnant. She moved to Ohio with her partner but returned to Massachusetts, homeless again with a baby daughter, living "couch to couch" until she reconnected with CTI, who



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Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services Secretary Kiame Mahaniah, right, with other local and state officials on a tour of Community Teamwork's The Mill You space for its Youth Services program on Nov. 13, 2025.



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Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services Secretary Kiame Mahaniah, left, greets Community Teamwork CEO Carl Howell during a visit to the Lowell nonprofit's Youth Services Nov. 13, 2025 in recognition of Homeless Youth Awareness Month.

helped get her housing.

"I appreciate the staff here so much ... They gave me every option available at the time," said Wilkerson.

"I have created a great bond with the staff. Even just hanging out in The Mill

You, being able to have that community, where they are not judging but they are here to hear out how to help the best they know how to do so," Wilkerson said later. "It has been really great because it has given me the

strength to want to expand on my vocabulary, and speak for the people in vulnerable communities."

Next to Wilkerson at the roundtable was Edmira Kabia, who said she was a civil engineering major in her first year of UMass Lowell when she found she could not manage the mental health toll, and ended up with an academic dismissal. She then went to Middlesex Community College, and now without student housing, she went to MCC's offices to ask if there was any way they could help while she faced housing insecurity. They gave her DiGiammo's contact information.

"A year ago I was a whole different person than I am now," said Kabia of the housing support CTI was able to offer her.

State Rep. Vanna Howard said the program was

"a critical program for our youth."

"The wraparound services CTI provides, and the amazing staff ... are here to make sure young adults have a place to go permanently after they leave the program," said Howard. "Having shelter, having a roof over your head is very important. You can't really do anything else until that is met."

Howard said she faced homelessness as a young adult, and she praised the kinds of safe places and services CTI offers now to young people in the same circumstances.

Lowell City Manager Tom Golden said the city is moving towards a focus on spending for housing, safety and food access.

"Those are the building blocks for a better community," said Golden.

"If you are looking for a prototype in the commonwealth of Massachusetts, if you are looking for an opportunity to try something new ... Nobody is better at it than CTI," Golden said later.

Golden praised CTI for responding to requests for help by the city to help support homeless individuals in different areas.

State Rep. Rodney Elliott said the local government "can't fill all the gaps."

"With CTI and these other organizations, we are blessed in this city," said Elliott.

Elliott referenced the lapse of Head Start program funding used by CTI during the recently concluded government shutdown.

"Luckily there was flexibility in the organization to keep paychecks to keep people employed," said Elliott.

Indicted

FROM PAGE 1

Court documents state that McCarthy was released on Oct. 9 following his initial appearance in federal court in Boston.

As part of his release conditions, he was ordered to submit to electronic location

monitoring, with responsibility for covering some or all of the costs. He is prohibited from possessing any pornographic materials, having contact with anyone under 18, or accessing the internet through a computer or other device. McCarthy must also surrender his passport, obtain approval for any family visits, and undergo a mental health evaluation while

complying with treatment requirements.

Additional restrictions include a ban on alcohol consumption and home detention, with exceptions for employment, mental health appointments, and attorney visits.

Prosecutors said the charges of distribution and receipt of child sexual abuse material are punishable by a

minimum of five years and up to 20 years in prison, fines of up to \$250,000, and supervised release that can last for the remainder of his life. Possession of child sexual abuse material carries a maximum sentence of 20 years, along with similar fines, and supervised release.

McCarthy's attorney, Forest O'Neill-Greenberg, was not immediately available

for comment.

Foley's office acknowledged the assistance of the Tewksbury Police Department and the State Police in the investigation.

This case is part of Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide Department of Justice initiative launched in 2006 to combat child sexual exploitation and abuse. The program brings

together federal, state, and local resources to investigate and prosecute offenders, while working to identify and protect victims.

For more information about Project Safe Childhood, visit justice.gov/psc.

Follow Aaron Curtis on X @aselahcurtis, or on Bluesky @aaronscurtis.bsky.social.



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