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For Immediate Release

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Representative Kane supports passage of \$41 billion House budget for Fiscal Year 2019

BOSTON – State Representative Hannah Kane, R-Shrewsbury, joined with her colleagues in the House of Representatives this week to approve a \$41 billion state budget for Fiscal Year 2019.

The budget, which was engrossed on a vote of 150-4 on April 26, calls for significant funding increases for local aid, the elderly, and substance abuse services. It also includes funding for several important local initiatives secured by Representative Kane for Shrewsbury and Westborough, including \$50,000 for Shrewsbury Youth and Family Services (SYFS) for the continuation of training Youth Mental Health First Aiders across the Commonwealth. To date, SYFS has linked over 375 young people to essential services to stop the onset or progression of mental illness through the training and certification of over 650 adults, many here in Central Massachusetts. However, a lengthy waitlist for training remains, for which these funds will provide critical assistance.

Representative Kane was also a lead sponsor of the Healthy Incentives Program (HIP) budget amendment. The HIP provides some of the Commonwealth's most vulnerable families with access to fresh, healthy, locally grown food and helps to sustain Massachusetts farms by significantly boosting their sales. Over 36,000 households and upwards of 200 farms statewide participated in the program's first year. Under the leadership of Representative Kane and her colleague, Representative Dan Donahue (D-Worcester), the HIP budget amendment received broad bi-partisan support from 90 House co-sponsors and secured a total of \$4 million in the House budget.

As in previous years, Representative Kane strongly advocated for out-of-district pupil transportation, which is the means by which over 100 school districts, like Shrewsbury, receive a portion of the school bus transportation cost to send students to Assabet Valley Regional Technical High School reimbursed. The House budget now includes \$250,000 for the out-of-district pupil transportation line item.

Representative Kane noted that this year's budget process was particularly challenging. Although state revenues have been trending upward in recent months, some of the uptick is believed to be associated with recent federal tax law changes and therefore may not continue

through the end of the fiscal year. There is also a great deal of uncertainty surrounding some of the proposed November ballot questions, which could have a direct impact on state revenues moving forward.

Despite these fiscal challenges, the House budget proposal prioritizes local aid for cities and towns by providing \$4.87 billion in Chapter 70 education aid, which represents an increase of \$124.6 million, or 2.6 percent, over current funding levels. Another \$1.1 billion has been allocated for unrestricted local aid to help support a variety of municipal services.

Representative Kane noted that under the House budget plan, Shrewsbury will receive \$19,887,358 in Chapter 70 education aid and \$2,880,275 in unrestricted state aid in Fiscal Year 2019. Westborough will receive \$7,951,974 in Chapter 70 education aid and \$1,198,188 in unrestricted state aid for Fiscal Year 2019.

The House budget also contains increases in several education-related accounts cities and towns rely on for state reimbursements, including:

- \$300.2 million for the Special Education Circuit Breaker, an \$18.9 million increase over current spending;
- \$63.5 million for regional school transportation, a \$2 million increase over current levels;
- \$90 million for charter school tuition reimbursements, an increase of \$9.5 million; and
- \$27.5 million for the “pothole” reserve to assist school districts experiencing substantial shortfalls between their actual Chapter 70 aid and target Chapter 70 aid, an increase of \$12.5 million.

Local Councils on Aging are funded at \$16.5 million under the House spending plan, an increase of \$2.9 million, while the formula grant rate is set at \$12 per elder, up from \$9.70 this year. The House budget also provides \$58.9 million to support the operation of the elder home care case management program, including contracts with aging service access points or other qualified entities for home care case management services and the administration of the home care organizations. This represents an increase of \$6.5 million.

The House budget also takes steps to address the state’s opioid epidemic by providing additional funding to assist individuals who are struggling with addiction. The Bureau of Substance Abuse Services is provided with an additional \$4.6 million in the House budget, for a total appropriation of \$137.2 million. This includes \$3.5 million for the opening of five new recovery centers.

A series of Republican-sponsored amendments, which Representative Kane supported, were also adopted as part of the House budget during the four-day floor debate, including:

- A phased-in, three-year increase in the annual cap on the Land Conservation Tax Credit from \$2 million to \$5 million to encourage the permanent protection of the state’s natural resources;

- An \$85,000 appropriation for the NEADS Assistance Dogs for Veterans program to train service dogs for veterans;
- The establishment of a Task Force on Regional Transit Authority Performance and Funding to evaluate and study RTA best practices, along with an earmark of \$2 million for RTAs that are struggling and the insertion of language requiring each RTA to sign an individual memorandum of understanding with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation by October 1, 2018 in order to receive funding for FY20;
- The creation of a task force to develop recommendations for establishing a uniform state policy regarding the cashing out of vacation and sick leave credits by state employees who are not subject to collective bargaining agreements; and
- The establishment of a special task force to review and report on the economic impact of loan forgiveness programs to ensure that college graduates stay, work, and build businesses in Massachusetts;

The budget now moves to the Senate, which is expected to release its own spending proposal on May 10.

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