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For Immediate Release

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Representative Kane supports passage of \$46.3 billion House budget for Fiscal Year 2021

BOSTON – State Representative Hannah Kane, R-Shrewsbury, recently supported a \$46.3 billion state budget for Fiscal Year 2021 that builds on local aid and commits additional spending to fund a variety of COVID-19 relief initiatives.

The House budget, which is typically debated and approved in April, was delayed for more than six months due to the economic uncertainty created by the pandemic, with state government continuing to operate under a series of interim budgets. The full-year spending plan, which runs through June 30, 2021, was engrossed on a vote of 143-14 on November 12.

Representative Kane said the House budget provides cities and towns with \$5.28 billion in Chapter 70 education aid, an increase of \$107.6 million, along with \$1.129 billion in Unrestricted General Government Assistance (UGGA) to support essential municipal services. The budget provides additional education support by funding the Special Education Circuit Breaker at \$328 million, charter school aid at \$117 million, regional school transportation at \$82 million, and homeless student transportation at \$13 million.

Representative Kane noted that under the House budget, Shrewsbury will receive \$20,068,648 in Chapter 70 education aid and \$2,958,042 in unrestricted state aid for Fiscal Year 2021. Westborough will receive \$8,310,848 in Chapter 70 education aid and \$1,230,539 in unrestricted state aid. Representative Kane was also able to secure funding for two Food System Caucus priorities, the Healthy Incentives Program (HIP) and the Massachusetts Emergency Food Assistance Program (MEFAP). She worked with fellow FSC House Co-Chairs Representative Donahue and Representative Schmid to secure \$30 million for MEFAP and \$13 million for HIP to help the Commonwealth address a rise in food insecurity due to the COVID-19 pandemic's devastating impact on the economy. Finally, Representative Kane was successful in the adoption of her amendment that allocates \$250,000 for school districts to cover the cost of out of district transportation for students to and from approved vocational technical programs.

To help address some of the housing challenges posed by COVID-19, the House budget commits \$50 million to the Residential Assistance to Families in Transition (RAFT) program, a \$33 million increase over last year's funding levels, and provides \$135 million for the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP), which represents a \$25 million increase. It also contains language prohibiting the courts from finalizing an eviction action against any tenant who has an active rental assistance application pending with the state.

According to Representative Kane, the budget provides financial assistance to small businesses that have been negatively impacted by the pandemic, including \$17.5 million in grants to help businesses with 50 or fewer employees meet their employee payroll costs and pay their rent and utilities. An additional \$3.85 million is

being made available for small business technical assistance and grant that focus on the needs of women-owned and minority business enterprises.

Continuing the state's efforts to combat the opioid epidemic and assist individuals struggling with substance abuse issues, the House budget funds the Bureau of Substance Addiction Services at \$161.7 million, an increase of \$11 million over last year. The budget also includes funding for jail diversion programs for non-violent offenders with opioid or opiate addiction, step-down recovery services, and first responder naloxone grants.

In addition, the House budget provides \$30 million in emergency food assistance funding and \$13 million for the Healthy Incentives Program to help address food insecurity during the pandemic. According to a report released by Feeding America on October 30, the hunger rate in Massachusetts has increased by 59% since 2018, with 1 in 5 children now living in a food-insecure household.

Other budget highlights include:

- \$45.8 million for domestic violence and sexual assault prevention and survivor services;
- \$17 million for local Councils on Aging;
- \$15 million in Head Start grants;
- \$10 million to assist low-income parents with child care;
- the creation of an Early Education and Care Public-Private Trust Fund;
- \$120 million in higher education scholarships; and
- \$306 million for guardianship, foster care, adoption, family preservation and kinship services provided by the Department of Children and Families

Representative Kane said the House budget does not include any new tax proposals, but instead relies on several one-time revenue sources, including a \$1.55 billion drawdown from the state's Stabilization Fund and \$422 million in capital gains tax offsets from Fiscal Year 2020. The budget also utilizes \$834 million in enhanced Medicaid reimbursements for MassHealth and \$550 million in coronavirus relief funds from the federal CARES Act, along with \$267 million made available by changing the date on which businesses collecting more than \$150,000 in sales, meals or occupancy taxes must remit these taxes to the state.

The budget now moves to the Senate, which is expected to begin debating its own spending proposal on November 17.

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