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For Immediate Release

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Rep. Kane supports \$626.5M economic development bill to assist businesses, spur housing production

BOSTON – Citing the pressing need to assist the state’s small businesses and create more affordable housing, State Representative Hannah Kane (R-Shrewsbury) recently supported a \$626.5 million economic development bond bill.

House Bill 5250, *An Act enabling partnerships for growth*, was enacted by the House of Representatives on a vote of 143-4 on January 5, the last day of the 2019-2020 legislative session. The final bill reflects compromise language negotiated by a six-member conference committee that worked to reconcile the differences between the initial House and Senate versions of the bill.

Representative Kane worked alongside colleague Senator Michael Moore (D-Millbury) to secure language in the bond bill providing that not less than \$500,000 be expended equally to Shrewsbury and seven surrounding communities (Worcester, Auburn, Grafton, Leicester, Millbury, Northbridge, Upton) for purposes of economic development.

In addition to providing \$20 million to help restaurants struggling financially during the COVID-19 global pandemic, House Bill 5250 makes additional funding available for small business grants and loans targeting women and minority-owned businesses. The bill also implements a 15% cap on the fees third party delivery services can charge restaurants with less than 25 locations, which will remain in effect for the duration of the declared COVID-19 state of emergency.

Language mirroring Governor Charlie Baker’s Housing Choice proposal is also included in the economic development bill, which authorizes cities and towns to approve certain zoning changes with a simple majority vote, rather than requiring a two-thirds vote. Representative Kane said lowering the threshold would promote additional development throughout the Commonwealth to help address the state’s housing shortage.

The legislation also contains funding for various initiatives that promote community development and housing production. For example, the bill provides \$40 million for a program to provide assistance to projects that will improve, rehabilitate or redevelop blighted, abandoned, vacant or underutilized properties. House Bill 5250 also provides \$10 million in financial assistance to accelerate and support the creation and preservation of sustainable and climate resilient affordable multi-family housing. Additionally, the bill allocates \$102.3 million to support various local economic development projects across the state.

A House-backed proposal to legalize sports betting in Massachusetts, which was projected to generate between \$25 million and \$35 million in new revenues, was dropped from the final bill. Representative Kane said she anticipates multiple sports betting proposals to be filed for consideration during the 2021-2022 legislative session.

The economic development bond bill also includes language:

- Expanding the state's low-income housing tax credit;
- Allowing tenants to seal no-fault evictions records;
- Prohibiting the naming of a minor as a defendant in an eviction claim;
- Requiring one member of a housing authority in a town to be a tenant member appointed by the board of selectmen;
- Establishing a bill of rights for student loan borrowers, regulating student loan servicers, and creating a student loan ombudsman;
- Allocating \$14 million in tourism grants for businesses and regional tourism councils;
- Permitting the establishment of tourism marketing districts;
- Providing grants for vocational schools to purchase equipment and make renovations;
- Promoting the creation of family-friendly, multi-unit housing within a half-mile of MBTA stations;
- Establishing a special legislative commission to study journalism in underserved communities in the Commonwealth;
- Establishing a special legislative commission to examine and make recommendations on addressing the recovery of the cultural and creative sector as a result of the outbreak of COVID-19 and the effects of the governor's declaration of a state of emergency; and
- Establishing a special commission to conduct a study relative to the impact of automation, artificial intelligence, global trade, access to new forms of data and the internet on the workforce, businesses and the economy.

The economic development bond bill is now before Governor Baker for his review.

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