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For Immediate Release

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December 4, 2020

Representative Kane supports passage of \$46.2 billion state budget for Fiscal Year 2021

BOSTON – State Representative Kane, R-Shrewsbury, recently supported a \$46.2 billion state budget for Fiscal Year 2021 (FY21) that increases local aid for cities and towns and commits additional spending to fund a variety of COVID-19 relief initiatives across Massachusetts.

The budget, which represents a compromise negotiated by a six-member House and Senate conference committee, was enacted by the House on a vote of 147-11 on December 4, less than 24 hours after the 396-page document was filed. The budget covers state spending through June 30, 2021, and comes five months after the Legislature passed the first of three interim budgets for the fiscal year that began on July 1.

Representative Kane said she had a number of concerns about how the budget process unfolded, but felt it was important to pass the bill to ensure that municipalities, families and businesses can access needed resources during the ongoing COVID-19 global pandemic.

“I still have many concerns about the process and the abbreviated time frame members were given to review the budget,” she said. “However, I voted yes because I believe that the budget contains significant investments in critical areas that either combat the COVID-19 pandemic directly, support those working on the front-lines or provide aid to those impacted by it. That being said, I would urge the Governor and his Administration to use the full 10 days allotted them by the Constitution to carefully review this package. While it contains several important components, it also includes some troubling pieces that should either be sent back with amendments or vetoed outright.”

The FY21 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 also contains additional education support by funding the Special Education Circuit Breaker at \$345 million, charter school reimbursements for sending districts at \$117 million, regional school transportation at \$82 million, and homeless student transportation at \$13 million.

Representative Kane noted that under the FY21 budget, Shrewsbury will receive \$20,068,648 in Chapter 70 education aid and \$2,958,042 in unrestricted state aid. Westborough will receive \$8,310,848 in Chapter 70 education aid and \$1,230,539 in unrestricted state aid.

Representative Kane also worked to secure \$30 million in emergency food assistance funding (MEFAP) and \$13 million for the Healthy Incentives Program (HIP) 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. As a Co-founder and Co-chair of the Legislature’s Food System Caucus, Representative Kane worked with her colleagues to advocate for these critical safety net programs to help the Commonwealth address the drastic rise in food insecurity due to the COVID-19 pandemic’s devastating impact on the economy.

Another successful budget initiative Representative Kane helped spearhead, working aside her colleagues Representative Denise Garlick (D-Needham) and Senator Jo Comerford (D-Northampton), was funding for local public health. The FY21 budget contains \$10M for local boards of health and \$1.7M for the Statewide Action for Public Health Excellence (SAPHE) program. The SAPHE legislation, H4503, filed by Representative Kane and Representative Garlick was signed into law by Governor Baker in April and the \$1.7M in budget funding will help strengthen the Commonwealth's local public health system by ensuring all members of the local public health workforce have access to essential training, increasing service sharing across municipalities, and moving the Commonwealth toward national standards for a 21st century public health system. The \$10M allocated for boards of health is a new line item of dedicated funding and recognizes the investments needed for local public health on the front-lines of fighting the COVID-19 pandemic.

To help address some of the housing challenges posed by the pandemic, the budget includes language requiring the courts to grant a continuance to tenants facing eviction for non-payment of rent due to financial hardship from the COVID-19 emergency if the tenant has an active rental assistance application pending with the state. It also commits \$50 million to the Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) program, and provides \$125 million for the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP).

The budget also provides \$46 million in grant funding to assist small businesses that have been negatively impacted by the pandemic, including \$17.5 million to help businesses with 50 or fewer employees meet their payroll, rent and utility costs. An additional \$3.85 million will be made available for small business technical assistance and grants that focus on the needs of women-owned and minority businesses.

Other budget highlights include:

- \$169 million for the Bureau of Substance Addiction Services;
- \$50.3 million for domestic violence and sexual assault prevention and survivor services;
- \$17.5 million in grants for local Councils on Aging;
- the creation of an Early Education and Care Public-Private Trust Fund;
- \$15 million in Head Start grants;
- \$120 million in higher education scholarships; and
- \$307 million for guardianship, foster care, adoption, family preservation and kinship services provided by the Department of Children and Families

Representative Kane said the FY21 budget does not include any new, broad-based taxes. Instead, it relies on several one-time revenue sources, including a \$1.7 billion drawdown from the state's Stabilization Fund, and an accelerated sales tax payment schedule for businesses collecting more than \$150,000 in sales, meals or occupancy taxes, which will provide an additional \$267 million in one-time revenues.

The FY21 budget, which has also been approved by the Senate, now moves to Governor Charlie Baker's desk for his review. The Governor has the power to issue line item vetoes and can also return portions of the budget to the Legislature with proposed amendments.

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