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Massachusetts Legislature Passes FY23 Budget

(BOSTON – 07/18/2022) - The Massachusetts Legislature on Monday unanimously passed a \$52.7 billion budget for Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23). This budget upholds fiscal responsibility and makes targeted investments to strengthen the state’s economic foundation, protect the most vulnerable residents and support the everyday needs of communities and families in the Commonwealth.

“I am pleased to have voted to pass a budget that keeps the needs of the Second Worcester District at its center. This legislation makes critical investments in education, healthcare, housing, and community services, among many other priorities, that will help the Commonwealth continue its robust recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic,” **Senator Michael Moore (D-Millbury)** said. “I’m also excited to share the amendments I was able to pass during budgetary debate that create statewide programs and secure funding for local priorities in each and every town in my district.”

“The FY23 budget commits the robust tax revenue to critical investments in the Commonwealth that continue to shore up the economy, support cities and towns through increased levels of local and education aid and help the most vulnerable in our state. With still high levels of food insecurity and raising inflation, I am heartened that the budget includes \$30.5M for emergency food assistance funding, \$12 million for the Healthy Incentives Program plus additional remaining funds from FY22, \$250,000 for Local Food Policy Councils, \$650,000 for UMass Extension, and \$110 million to continue to provide universal free school meals, top priorities of the Legislature’s Food System Caucus of which I am a Co-founder and Co-chair,” remarked **Representative Hannah Kane (R-Shrewsbury)**. “I am grateful for Senator Moore’s partnership in successfully securing amendments for Shrewsbury”.

In response to funding priorities identified by the towns and cities in the Second Worcester District, Senator Moore and Representative Kane secured the following amendments:

Shrewsbury

- **\$69,000** to Shrewsbury to purchase new voting machines
- **\$50,000** for Shrewsbury Youth and Family Services, Inc. for their continued implementation across the Commonwealth of the National Council for Behavioral Health’s Youth Mental Health First Aid program
- **\$25,400** to Shrewsbury Fire Department to fund firefighter physical examinations

“The Town is grateful that Senator Moore was able to secure funding for new voting machines,” said **Kevin J Mizikar, Shrewsbury Town Manager**. “Being able to replace our existing aging machines means that we will continue to provide secure and accurate elections which is the centerpiece of democracy.”

Representative Kane also worked alongside her colleague Senator Comerford (D-Northampton) to secure \$15 million in the budget for local and regional public health efforts, continuing their efforts to build upon the successful State Action for Public Health Excellence (SAPHE) Program.

Senator Moore also secured a number of amendments establishing statewide programs. A few highlights include:

- **\$10 million** extended to fund early college classes and activities for high schoolers during the summer
- **\$9 million** extended to fund dual enrollment opportunities for high schoolers during the summer
- **\$500,000** in additional funding to the Massachusetts Environmental Police
- **\$25,000** to Veterans Inc to fund their Veterans substance abuse treatment and recovery program

“The increased funding will allow the Massachusetts Environmental Police to expand their educational and enforcement programs to ensure that the natural resources and marine resources of the Commonwealth remain viable for future generations to enjoy,” said **Colonel Shaun Santos of the Massachusetts Environmental Police**, speaking on the \$500,000 of additional funding secured in the FY23 budget.

Speaking on the \$25,000 grant given to Veterans Inc’s substance abuse treatment and recovery program, **Vincent Perrone, Lt Col., USAF (retired), President & CEO of Veterans Inc.** said: “Senator Moore is a tireless advocate for the issues facing our veterans and their families. It is tragic that veterans in our communities make up a disproportionate share of those suffering from substance use disorders. Veterans Inc. offers outreach to those veterans, and recovery treatment at our Independence Hall facility in Shrewsbury, in large part because of the support of our elected leaders like Senator Moore. This funding, and Senator Moore’s efforts, couldn’t come at a better time.”

Taking into consideration historic tax revenue performance in Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22), the final FY23 conference report increases revenue projections by \$2.66 billion over the December consensus for a projection of \$39.575 billion. The FY23 budget transfers funds into the Stabilization Fund, projecting an estimated historic balance of approximately \$7.35 billion for this crucial ‘rainy day’ fund at the end of the fiscal year.

Notably, the Legislature provides significant funds in the FY23 budget to invest in the Commonwealth’s long-term future obligations. Prioritizing funding for education, this budget includes \$175 million in a newly created High-Quality Early Education and Care Affordability Trust Fund to be utilized in the coming years to support the implementation of the recommendations made by the Early Education and Care Economic Review Commission. Additionally, a supplemental payment of \$150 million is included to the Student Opportunity Act

(SOA) Investment fund, bringing its balance up to \$500 million, ensuring resources will be utilized in the future to support equitable funding for our most vulnerable students.

The budget strongly reflects the Legislature's commitment to support cities and towns and provides a significant amount of local and regional aid to ensure communities can provide essential services to the public while rebuilding from a once-in-a-generation pandemic. This includes \$1.231 billion in funding for Unrestricted General Government Aid (UGGA), an increase of \$63 million over FY22, and \$45 million in payments in lieu of taxes (PILOT) for state-owned land, an increase of \$10 million over FY22, providing supplemental local aid payments to cities and towns working to improve access to essential services and programs.

The FY23 budget includes \$187 million to fund the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) as well as \$226.2 million for a safety and workforce reserve to address ongoing safety concerns identified by the Federal Transit Administration's Safety Management Inspection.

As a cornerstone of the Commonwealth's economic foundation, the FY23 budget expands access to educational opportunity and strongly supports students, families, educators, and institutions. Delivering on the Legislature's promise to fully fund and implement the SOA by FY27, this budget invests \$6 billion in Chapter 70 funding, an increase of \$495 million over FY22, and doubles minimum Chapter 70 aid from \$30 to \$60 per pupil. This historic level of investment ensures the state remains on schedule to fully implement the law, provides school districts with resources to provide high quality educational opportunities, and addresses rising costs and administrative challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The FY23 budget also includes \$110 million for a year-long extension of universal school meals, providing immediate relief to working families by saving them up to \$1,200 every year from reduced grocery expenditures, according to The Feed Kids Coalition.

The budget also reflects a strong commitment to early education and care, investing \$1.18 billion into this sector, including \$365 million in new resources to begin implementation of recommendations made by the Early Education and Care Economic Review Commission. These investments will help to stabilize providers, support the early educator workforce with rate increases and higher education opportunities, and provide access to affordable care for children and families.

The budget invests in higher education, allocating \$670 million for the University of Massachusetts system, \$352 million for community colleges, and \$328 million for state universities. The budget also includes \$175 million in scholarship funding and funds the community colleges SUCCESS Fund at \$14 million and the STEM Starter Academy at \$4.75 million. The budget also expands access to inclusive education opportunities for young adults with disabilities by removing existing barriers, codifies the Massachusetts Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Initiative (MAICEI) grant program and dedicates \$4 million in flexible resources for the public higher education system to support inclusive learning options for this diverse student population.

Other education investments include:

- \$441 million for the Special Education Circuit Breaker, reimbursing school districts for the high cost of educating students with disabilities at the statutorily required 75 per cent reimbursement rate
- \$244 million for reimbursing school districts at 75 per cent for costs incurred when students leave to attend charter schools
- \$82.2 million for regional school transportation
- \$23 million for homeless student transportation
- \$16.5 million for grants to the Head Start program to maintain access to early education services for low-income families

- \$15 million for the Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative to expand access to pre-kindergarten and preschool opportunities in underserved areas
- \$6 million for Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Grants to help K-12 schools bolster SEL supports for students, including \$1 million for a new pilot program to provide mental health screenings for K-12 students
- \$1.5 million for the Genocide Education Trust Fund, fulfilling our commitment to fund efforts to educate middle and high school students on the history of genocide and support implementation efforts in accordance with Chapter 98 of the Acts of 2021, *An Act Concerning Genocide Education*, passed by the Legislature in 2021

Recognizing that health care makes up more than 40 percent of our annual state budget, the Legislature’s FY23 budget sustains support for the state’s safety net by funding MassHealth at a total of \$19.48 billion, ensuring over 2.1 million people with continued access to comprehensive health care services. The budget prepares for the transition of individuals from MassHealth to the Health Connector when the federal public health emergency ends by providing \$50 million for a Connector Care Pilot Program, which utilizes savings from the American Rescue Plan to fund subsidized health insurance plans for members that are between 300%-500% of the federal poverty level (FPL) for two years. It also invests \$73 million to expand eligibility for the Medicare Savings Program to 225% FPL.

The FY23 budget invests in the human services workforce who provide services to the state’s most vulnerable residents, including \$230 million for Chapter 257 rates for health and human service workers, \$40 million to continue higher rate add-ons and ensure a smaller wage cliff between FY22 and FY23 for home health aides and homemakers, and \$1 million for the Nursing and Allied Health Workforce Development program. Additional investments include funding for programming such as the Elder Mental Health Outreach Teams, the Safe and Successful Youth Initiative Expansion, nine Elder Supportive Housing Sites, and the SHINE Program.

Funding a range of services to help those struggling and in need, the FY23 budget invests \$218.2 for substance use disorder and intervention services provided by the Bureau of Substance Addiction Services and more importantly, addresses the mental health crisis in Massachusetts by creating the Behavioral Health Access and Crisis Intervention Trust Fund, which will fund crisis supports and a new behavioral health crisis hotline.

It also invests \$20 million to recapitalize the Behavioral Health, Access, Outreach and Support Trust Fund to support targeted behavioral health initiatives, \$15 million for emergency department diversion initiatives for children, adolescents, and adults and \$8.2 million to support student behavioral health services at the University of Massachusetts, state universities and community colleges.

Sending a strong and unequivocal message that reproductive and gender affirming health care will be protected in Massachusetts in the face of growing legal uncertainty across the United States after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, the FY23 budget invests \$2 million in grants for improvements to reproductive health access, infrastructure, and safety.

Finally, recognizing that stroke is a leading cause of long-term disability and death in the United States and Massachusetts, the FY23 budget includes provisions establishing a comprehensive system of stroke response and care to ensure patients receive the appropriate urgent care quickly. With this system of care in place, a person experiencing a stroke will be transported to the nearest trauma center, improving long-term health outcomes and rates of survival.

Other health care and public health investments include:

- \$113.1 million for children’s mental health services

- \$28.3 million for Family Resource Centers to grow and improve the mental health resources and programming available to families
- \$75.3 million for sexual assault and domestic violence prevention services
- \$48.8 million for early intervention services, to ensure increased supports for families with infants and young toddlers with developmental delays and disabilities

Building on the foundation of last year’s efforts to tackle deep poverty, the FY23 budget supports working families struggling with the economic toll associated with rising costs and includes a record investment in the annual child’s clothing allowance, providing \$400 per child for eligible families to buy clothes for the upcoming school year. The budget also includes a 10 percent increase to Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC) and Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled and Children (EAEDC) benefit levels compared to June 2022 to ensure the economic supports necessary to provide stability to families across the state.

Other children and family investments include:

- \$30.6 million for Emergency Food Assistance to ensure that citizens in need can navigate the historic levels of food insecurity caused by COVID-19
- \$28.5 million for the YouthWorks jobs program to fund over 6,000 summer and year-round jobs for youth in low-wage-earning and fixed-income families
- \$20 million in Healthy Incentives Programs to maintain access to healthy food options for households in need
- \$7.5 million for grants to community foundations to support communities disproportionately impacted by the pandemic
- \$3.5 million for the Massachusetts Center on Child Wellbeing & Trauma
- \$4.1 million for Children Advocacy Centers to improve the resources available to children who have been neglected or sexually abused

The FY23 budget provides resources to help with housing stability to keep individuals and families in their homes, including \$219.4 million for Emergency Assistance Family Shelters, more than \$200 million for Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT), \$175 million for the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP) and \$92 million for assistance to local housing authorities. The budget also upholds the emergency-level maximum amount of rental assistance that a household can receive at \$10,000 and requires the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to study and report on the execution of no-fault evictions between 2019 and 2022.

The budget funds the Department of Developmental Services at \$2.44 billion, aimed to support individuals with developmental disabilities and their families. It includes \$278.5 million for Community Day and Work Programs, \$90.6 million for respite services, \$42.3 million in autism supports and services, \$33.9 million in transportation services, \$13.9 million for the autism division, and \$1.8 million for supportive technology for individuals.

For the first time ever, the FY23 budget removes barriers to communication services for incarcerated persons and their loved ones, requiring the Department of Correction (DOC) and sheriffs to provide phone calls free of charge to those receiving and initiating phone calls and other services such as video or electronic communications. It also establishes a new requirement that commissary items in correctional facilities shall not be sold at more than 3 per cent over the purchase cost. Both changes ensure that correctional facilities do not unjustly profit off the basic needs of incarcerated persons. The budget also eliminates probation and parole fees, reducing the burden on individuals during their re-entry process. Currently, individuals pay \$50 per month for

administrative supervised probation fees, \$65 per month for probation supervision fees, and \$80 per month in parole fees.

To meet the needs of our Commonwealth's post-pandemic recovery, the FY23 budget invests more than \$100 million to bolster job training programs, help connect unemployed and under-employed people with higher paying jobs and support career services that help students gain skills to apply for future jobs. The budget includes \$20 million for Career Technical Institutes to increase the skilled worker population's access to career technical training opportunities, a \$17 million transfer to the Workforce Competitiveness Trust fund, and \$15 million for one-stop career centers to support economic recovery. The budget also includes a \$1 million investment in Learn to Earn and \$1 million for the 1199 SEIU Training and Upgrading Fund.

Other investments in economic and workforce development include:

- \$60 million for Adult Basic Education
- \$20 million for the Community Empowerment and Reinvestment Grant Program
- \$20 million for a loan forgiveness program within the Department of Mental Health to support their workforce
- \$15 million to support teachers of color, including \$7.5 million for Tomorrow's Teachers program to provide scholarships to people committed to teaching in public schools and \$7.5 million for loan repayment for teachers of color
- \$10 million for loan repayment and bonuses for the homeless shelter workforce that continue to provide critical services to the most vulnerable
- \$4.8 million for the Innovation Pathways program to continue to connect students to trainings and post-secondary opportunities in the industry sector with a focus on STEM fields
- \$2.5 million for the Massachusetts Cybersecurity Innovation Fund, including \$1.5 million to continue partnerships with community colleges and state universities to provide cybersecurity workforce training to students and cybersecurity services to municipalities, non-profits, and small businesses

The budget also continues the Legislature's focus on environmental and climate protection by investing \$375.2 million for environmental services, which include funding increases for state parks, environmental protection, and fisheries and wildlife. Additional measures include promoting electric vehicles and funding for environmental justice and climate adaptation and preparedness.

The FY23 budget also establishes a veteran equality review board to ensure that veterans dishonorably discharged under 'Don't Ask Don't Tell' receive state-based veterans' benefits.

Having been passed by the House and Senate, the legislation now goes to Governor Baker for his signature.

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