



COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
THE GENERAL COURT
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133-1053

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Date: November 30, 2023

CONTACT:

Jessica Margiotta, Senate Minority Leader Bruce Tarr's office – 978-675-6109;

jessica.margiotta@masenate.gov

Michael E. Smith, Rep. Jones' office – 781-439-0516; michael.smith@mahouse.gov

House and Senate Republicans Call for Formal Session to Address Supplemental Budget

Cite the Need for Transparency and Full Debate

Boston – Today Republican members of the House and Senate will file an order to cause both chambers to meet in a formal session to consider the conference committee report for the closeout supplemental budget for Fiscal Year 2023, which contains approximately \$2.8 billion in spending, contains controversial items, and is necessary for the state comptroller to close the Commonwealth's books for Fiscal Year 2023, which ended on June 30. A joint House-Senate conference committee report filed this afternoon by the members charged with reconciling the House and Senate versions of the bill contains such items as \$300 million for over 90 collective bargaining agreements for state employees, \$15 million in relief for communities impacted by severe weather events, and \$250 million for the state's emergency shelter system to be able to continue to try to accommodate the ongoing influx of migrants coming into Massachusetts.

"This voluminous document, that spends nearly \$3 billion of funding on a wide range of items, needs and deserves to be taken up in a formal session, where it can be carefully scrutinized, debate can occur, and members can be recorded through roll calls, none of which can occur in informal sessions that are reserved for non-controversial matters," said Senate Minority Leader Bruce Tarr (R-Gloucester). "The rules do not permit these things in informal sessions, because informal sessions are not designed for the circumstances we face with regard to a bill of this impact and magnitude."

According to Joint Rule 12A, formal sessions are not permitted to occur in the first year of the biennial session past the third Wednesday in November, which this year fell on November 15. Thus, an order such as the one legislative Republicans have filed is necessary to authorize a formal session now. Such orders have been adopted at least three times during the first year of a two-year legislative session since Joint Rule 12A was adopted in 1995: on November 10, 1999;

November 15, 2001; and November 16, 2005. For a formal session to occur, the order must be adopted by a majority vote of the House and Senate.

“A controversial spending bill of this magnitude should be taken up during a formal session, with debate and roll calls, which is what this order seeks to do,” said House Minority Leader Bradley H. Jones, Jr. (R-North Reading). “House and Senate Republicans are united in this position and are asking that both branches reconvene in a full formal session before the end of the year to address the important funding provisions and policy issues contained in this final deficiency appropriations bill.”

###