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*For Immediate Release*

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**Rep. Kane highlights the legislative accomplishments, shortcomings of the 2019-2020 session**

**BOSTON –** As the Legislature enters a brief summer recess, State Representative Hannah Kane (R-Shrewsbury) recently took some time to reflect on the major accomplishments, as well as the shortcomings, of the 2019-2020 legislative session thus far.

In what has been a session unlike any other, the House of Representatives has found itself spending much of the 2020 calendar year dealing with the unprecedented impacts of the COVID-19 global pandemic, as well as a growing national movement to address systemic racial inequities.

Since the early stages of the pandemic and the declaration of a State of Emergency by Governor Charlie Baker on March 10, the House has passed numerous bills to assist residents who have lost their jobs, small businesses that have been struggling to survive the economic fallout, and cities and towns that are trying to balance their budgets while maintaining essential services. In addition to helping residents access unemployment benefits, the House has also supported a temporary moratorium on evictions and foreclosures, approved alcohol sales with food take-out orders and other measures to assist restaurants, and given municipalities expanded options for safely convening town meetings and conducting local and state elections.

The House also passed legislation this year to address racial disparities in maternal health outcomes in Massachusetts, where the risk of pregnancy-related deaths for black women is three to four times higher than those of white women, as well as legislation establishing Juneteenth Independence Day as an official state holiday. In addition, the House has taken initial steps towards implementing police training reforms in the wake of the murder of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police officers on May 25, but a deal with the Senate on what the final bill will look like remains the subject of negotiations in conference committee.

During the 2019-2020 legislative session, the House took action on multiple bills to protect some of the state’s most vulnerable residents, approving a ban on female genital mutilation, creating a statewide do-not-hire registry to track caregivers who abuse clients with intellectual disabilities, and expanding reporting requirements at the Department of Children and Families. The House was also the first legislative branch to launch an investigation into the coronavirus-related deaths of 76 residents of the Holyoke Soldiers Home, which has now expanded to a joint investigation with the Senate.

As the Commonwealth faces continued economic uncertainty and awaits a clearer picture of the fiscal impacts of the pandemic, the House has passed multiple temporary budgets and policy measures to leverage federal reimbursement and allow the state to operate until the Legislature can pass a Fiscal Year 2021 (FY21) budget. Representative Kane noted that on July 30, the Legislature and the Baker-Polito Administration reached an agreement on preliminary FY21 local aid figures that holds communities and school districts harmless by level-funding Chapter 70 education aid and factoring in a $107 million statewide increase to account for inflation and enrollment changes. Unfortunately, a wider expansion of education aid envisioned as part of the 2019 Student Opportunity Act will likely be delayed for now, as the state continues to grapple with the economic fallout from the pandemic.

While formal legislative sessions typically end on July 31 in even-numbered years, the House and Senate recently agreed to suspend this rule in order to continue meeting in formal sessions as needed for the remainder of the calendar year. Representative Kane said the extended formal sessions will allow legislators to take additional steps to address the many challenges posed by the 2019 novel coronavirus, including passing a full-year state budget.

Listed below are several of the key initiatives supported by Representative Kane that were passed by the House of Representatives during the 2019-2020 legislative session, many of which have been signed into law.

**COVID-19 PANDEMIC LEGISLATIVE RESPONSE**

**Interim Budget Planning/Federal Reimbursement** – In April, the Legislature approved a three-month delay in the income tax filing deadline, which was moved to July 15 with the signing of **Chapter 53 of the Acts of 2020** to coincide with Congress’ approval of a similar extension of the federal tax deadline. Knowing the loss of revenues would result in an unbalanced budget, the Legislature quickly enacted House Bill 4677, which authorized the state treasurer to issue Revenue Anticipation Notes (RANs), and allowed the state to borrow against revenue that comes in after FY20, while also allowing income tax payments received in FY21 that were originally due in FY20 to be recorded as FY20 revenues. This bill was signed into law on May 15 as **Chapter 78 of the Acts of 2020**.

In June, the House gave initial approval to a $1.1 billion supplemental budget (House Bill 4802) passed in anticipation of federal reimbursement. The bill provides funds for costs that the Commonwealth has incurred and continues to incur in response to the COVID-19 outbreak and has a net state cost of $0. Included in this legislation was an amendment establishing Juneteenth Independence Day as an annual state holiday on June 19 to recognize the continued need to ensure racial freedom and equality. The supplemental budget included $25,000 for St Anne’s Food Pantry in Shrewsbury and $10,000 for PPE for the Town of Shrewsbury, both the result of amendments filed by Representative Kane. $25,000 for the Westborough Food Pantry and $10,000 for PPE for the Town of Westborough were also provided for in the supplemental budget due to amendments Representative Gregoire filed, which Representative Kane co-sponsored. Finally, there was a provision in the supplemental budget secured by Senator Moore that $175,000 is equally distributed to seven towns, one of which is Shrewsbury, for technology, health, and safety improvements in public schools related to COVID-19.The bill was signed in part by the Governor on July 24 as **Chapter 124 of the Acts of 2020**.

In July, the House approved and enacted a $16.53 billion interim budget to keep government operations running through October 31 while the Legislature works to craft a full FY21 budget. The language approved required line items to be funded at not less than the lower of the FY20 budget or the Governor’s FY21 operating budget recommendations. In signing the bill into law as **Chapter 131 of the Acts of 2020** on August 4, the Governor returned the sections requiring minimum spending and omitting the October 31 sunset date.

**WORKFORCE ASSISTANCE**

**Unemployment Benefit Waiting Period Waiver (Chapter 40 of the Acts of 2020)** – In March, at the start of the COVID-19 outbreak, the Legislature passed Senate Bill 2599, *An Act authorizing waiver of the one week waiting period for unemployment benefits*. The legislation effectively waives the one-week waiting period for claiming unemployment benefits until 90 days after the termination of the State of Emergency. Representative Kane noted the bill was passed to quickly provide financial support to the more than 1 million state residents who unexpectedly became separated from work due to the pandemic.

**Unemployment Insurance Support (Chapter 81 of the Acts of 2020)** – On May 21, the Legislature approved Senate Bill 2618, *An Act providing additional support to those affected by the novel coronavirus through the unemployment insurance system*. This bill includes provisions extending state unemployment benefits from 26 weeks to 30 weeks, beginning on January 1, 2021, whenever initial unemployment claims filed in any week exceed 100,000, unless the federal government authorizes a period of extended benefits, in which case state benefits will remain in place for 26 weeks until the extended federal benefits have been exhausted.

Representative Kane said Chapter 81 also protects employers by prohibiting unemployment benefits paid to individuals whose job loss is directly related to the coronavirus or the State of Emergency from being charged to an employer or used in the calculation of their experience rate, and prohibiting benefits from being charged to an employer’s account if the benefits are paid for by federal funds. These changes will remain in effect until May 26, 2021 or six months after the termination of the State of Emergency, whichever is later.

**MUNICIPAL ASSISTANCE**

**Addressing Challenges Face by Municipalities & State Authorities During COVID-19 (Chapter 53 of the Acts of 2020)** – In April, in an effort to address the impacts of COVID-19, the Legislature passed House Bill 4598, *An Act to address challenges faced by municipalities and state authorities resulting from COVID-19*. This legislation contained several provisions to assist towns and residents, including: permitting town meeting to be delayed beyond June 30; allowing the recess and continuance of town meeting; permitting the temporary adoption of interim FY21 budgets; delaying the due date for municipal property tax bills; waiving interest payments and other penalties on late payments for any excise, tax, betterment assessment, water or sewer bill; and permitting municipalities to use free cash, to amortize FY20 deficits due to COVID-19, and to expend amounts from revolving funds.

**Municipal Governance During COVID-19 (Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2020)** – In June, the Legislature passed Senate Bill 2680, *An Act relative to municipal governance during the COVID-19 emergency*. This bill provides additional flexibility to towns during the global pandemic by permitting town meetings to be held remotely, outside of geographic limits in necessary, and with a reduced quorum requirement. It also provides cities with additional time to finalize their FY21 budgets and allows towns to suspend dedicated revenues from special funds for FY21 in order to appropriate money from those funds. In addition to allowing for the temporary postponement of municipal elections, Chapter 92 gives voters the option to vote by absentee ballot or through early voting by mail if a municipal election is rescheduled. Additional language contained in the bill prohibits a city, town, or district from terminating an essential service – including water, trash collection or electricity – for nonpayment of taxes or fees if the nonpayment resulted from a demonstrated financial hardship during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**SCHOOL ASSISTANCE**

**COVID-19 Education Related State Action** – On April 10, the Governor signed into law *An Act to further address challenges faced by municipalities, school districts and state authorities resulting from COVID-19* as **Chapter 56 of the Acts of 2020**, which:

* Permits the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) to modify or waive the competency determination requirement;
* Waives the MCAS requirement for the 2019-2020 academic year;
* Allows regional school districts to utilize 1/12th budgets should they be unable to approve a budget prior to the start of the new fiscal year; and
* Requires the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to extend the 3-year plan reporting deadline required by the 2019 Student Opportunity Act.

On May 20, the House passed House Bill 4733, *An Act financing the general governmental infrastructure of the Commonwealth*, an IT bond bill which includes $40 million in education grants to public schools to enhance remote learning environments and services. $30,400 for the Westborough Public Library to allow for social distancing and updated technology capabilities and connectivity was included, as well as $225,000 for Shrewsbury and Upton to be spent on security technology and equipment. The bill was signed into law on August 7 as **Chapter 151 of the Acts of 2020**.

On June 4, the House and Senate passed an amendment (House Bill 4777) to Senate Bill 2680, *An Act relative to municipal governance during the COVID-19 emergency*, which establishes an emergency educator license issued by the Commissioner for individuals that were prevented from completing the testing, demonstration of subject matter knowledge, coursework, or program requirements for a license due to COVID-19. It also authorizes the Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education to issue emergency educator licenses during the State of Emergency and for up to 180 days after its termination, while allowing municipalities to make payments for existing service contracts for school and education related services in order to ensure they remain operational. Governor Baker signed this bill into law on June 5 as **Chapter 92 of the Acts of 2020**.

**SMALL BUSINESS ASSISTANCE**

**Expanding Take-out/Delivery Options During COVID-19 (Chapter 118 of the Acts of 2020)** – In mid-July, the Legislature approved Senate Bill 2812, *An Act to expand take-out/delivery options in response to COVID-19*, to provide financial relief to restaurants that have suffered during the global pandemic. The legislation permits restaurants to sell to-go cocktails with food take-out and delivery orders for the duration of the Governor’s declared State of Emergency. Customers are limited to 2 mixed drinks per order, which may not exceed 64 fluid ounces.

Chapter 118 was a compromise between the Senate and the House. Earlier in the summer, the House had voted overwhelmingly to pass a more extensive restaurant relief package, which also included language pertaining to take-out cocktails. House Bill 4767, *An Act addressing challenges faced by food and beverage establishments resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic*, would allow restaurants to delay filing their 2020 meals taxes without penalties or interest; provide municipalities with the option to grant additional liquor licenses; and limit third party delivery fees to 15%. The Senate has yet to take up the bill.

**HOMEOWNERS/RENTERS ASSISTANCE**

**Eviction and Foreclosure Moratorium (Chapter 65 of the Acts of 2020)** – On April 20, Governor Baker signed House Bill 4667, *An Act providing for a moratorium on evictions and foreclosures during the COVID-19 emergency*. Aimed at protecting those who have been adversely impacted financially from the pandemic from losing their home, this bill halted the processing of non-essential evictions for residential dwellings as well as small businesses until August 18, 2020. On July 21, Governor Baker extended this protection for 60 days, ending now on October 17, 2020.

For landlords, the bill authorizes owners to use advanced rent payments in order to pay for standard expenses such as mortgage payments on the rental property, utilities, repairs and required upkeep, so long as the owner replenishes the advanced rent payment prior to the end of the leasing term for current tenants. The bill also requires creditors or mortgagees to grant forbearance to mortgage holders who have been financially impacted by the pandemic, with payments subject to forbearance to be attached to the end of the mortgage term.

**EXPANDED VOTING OPTIONS**

**Vote by Mail (Chapter 115 of the Acts of 2020)** – On July 6, Governor Baker signed House Bill 4820, *An Act relative to voting options in response to COVID-19*. Coming on the heels of in-person voting in other states, where outbreaks of COVID-19 were reported as a result of voters congregating at polling places, the Legislature sought to broaden the number of options for voters leading up to the 2020 primary and general election.

While possible solutions initially ranged from universal mail-in ballots being sent to every registered voter, to curbside voting, House Bill 4820 provides for registered voters to automatically receive an application to request a mail-in ballot and expands in-person early voting to include ten days prior to both the primary and general election. Those who choose to vote by mail have the option of mailing in their completed ballot to their city or town clerk or dropping their ballot off in a designated municipal drop box at their clerk’s office or early voting location.

**ELECTRONIC NOTARIZATIONS**

**Virtual Notarizations (Chapter 71 of the Acts of 2020)** – On April 23, Governor Baker signed Senate Bill 2645, *An Act providing for virtual notarization to address challenges related to COVID-1*9. Expanding on the Legislature’s actions to proactively address the unique challenges COVID-19 has presented to the state, this bill establishes a new process for electronic notarizations, by way of video conferencing and by use of satisfactory evidence of identity. With this change, the Legislature continued to tackle the challenges posed by this pandemic and sought to maintain routine business in the Commonwealth.

**PAID SICK LEAVE DURING PANDEMIC**

**Emergency Paid Sick Leave (Approved Committee Redraft of House Bill 4700/Senate Bill 2701)** – Recently, the Joint Committee on Labor & Workforce Development voted to advance a redrafted version of *An Act relative to emergency paid sick leave*. This legislation would provide two weeks of state paid sick leave to employees who do not qualify for federal emergency paid leave during the public health crisis. Those individuals who work 40 hours a week will qualify for 80 hours of sick leave, while those who work under 40 hours will receive an amount equal to what they would normally work during a two-week period. The reasons a worker may be eligible to collect such paid sick leave under this legislation include: the need to self-isolate after contracting a communicable illness related to a public health emergency; displaying symptoms of such an illness; to recover from such an illness; or to care for an ill family member affected by the disease. Under the legislation, the maximum sick leave benefit is capped at $850 a week, and the leave provided must meet state requirements concerning the minimum wage. Lastly, the bill requires the Attorney General to prepare a notice in a variety of languages, to be distributed by employers, on an employee’s rights to obtain sick leave in accordance with this legislation. The House redraft (House Bill 4928) was referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means on July 30, while the Senate redraft (Senate Bill 2882) was referred to the Senate Committee on Ways and Means on August 3.

**POLICE REFORM**

**Police Reform Proposals (House Bill 4860/Senate Bill 2820)** – Perhaps the biggest, and most controversial, issue tackled by the Legislature this year not related to COVID-19 was the debate over police reforms that took place in the House and Senate in July. The House engrossed House Bill 4860, *An Act relative to justice, equity and accountability in law enforcement in the Commonwealth*, on July 24, following three days of debate. The bill’s passage came just 10 days after the Senate approved its own version of the police reform bill (Senate Bill 2820, *An Act to reform police standards and shift resources to build a more equitable, fair and just commonwealth that values Black lives and communities of color*).

The House bill replaces the existing Municipal Police Training Committee, currently located within the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security, with a Committee on Police Training and Certification within the newly-created Massachusetts Police Standards and Training Commission. It also creates a Division of Police Training and Certification to establish uniform policies and standards for the training and certification of all law enforcement officers. Furthermore, it:

* Stipulates that the Massachusetts Police Standards and Training Commission will be responsible for establishing minimum officer certification standards, and will have the authority to revoke or suspend a certification;
* Invests the commission with the responsibility for preserving complaints and referring cases for criminal prosecution to the appropriate federal, state or local authorities;
* Establishes a Law Enforcement Body Camera Task Force;
* Severely limits the use of deadly force, tear gas and rubber bullets;
* Requires all law enforcement officers to be trained in the detection, intervention and prevention of suicide;
* Updates training requirements and standards of conduct for school resource officers;
* Creates a model school resource officer memorandum of understanding review commission;
* Establishes a special legislative commission to study the use of facial recognition technology by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation;
* Authorizes the Governor to appoint the State Police Colonel from outside the department; and,
* Removes the protections from civil lawsuits offered by qualified immunity for any officer who has been decertified.

While Representative Kane supports reforms backed by the Massachusetts Black and Latino Legislative Caucus to certify law enforcement officers, ban chokeholds, and create a duty for officers to intervene if they witness police misconduct by a colleague, she said the proposals passed by the House and Senate go too far and could ultimately compromise public safety by deterring qualified candidates from pursuing a law enforcement career and prompting other seasoned veterans to leave the profession.

One of the major points of contention in both bills involves the use of qualified immunity, which protects police officers and other public officials from the threat of civil liability. Although the House takes a less drastic approach than the Senate on this issue, there is still a great deal of confusion around qualified immunity, as well as concerns about making changes to the law without fully understanding the potential implications and unintended consequences that could result.

Prior to the bill’s passage, the House adopted an amendment calling for the establishment of a special commission to study qualified immunity and report back to the Legislature by March 31, 2021, but left the bill’s underlying language related to qualified immunity untouched. An attempt to further amend this proposal by delaying the implementation of any qualified immunity changes until the commission reports its findings was narrowly defeated on a vote of 72-87.

The House and Senate have appointed a conference committee that is now attempting to reconcile the differences between the two police reform bills.

**HEALTH CARE/PUBLIC HEALTH**

**Local and Regional Public Health (Chapter 72 of the Acts of 2020)** – On April 23, the Legislature approved a bill to strengthen the Commonwealth’s local and regional public health system, which Representative Kane co-filed with Representative Garlick. The legislation requires the Department of Public Health (DPH) to provide members of the local and regional public health workforce with access to educational training courses. The bill also creates an incentive grant program to support efficient delivery of services, and requires the Special Commission on Local and Regional Public Health to assess a foundational standard for public health services in the Commonwealth. The bill notes that local public health services should include communicable disease control, chronic disease and injury prevention, environmental public health, maternal, child and family health and access to and linkage with clinical care.

Under this bill, which was signed into law on April 29, the State Action for Public Health Excellence Program would encourage local boards of health and regional health districts to strengthen local health services and follow the recommendations set forth by the Special Commission on Local and Regional Public Health. This program would encourage cross-jurisdictional sharing of public health services to strengthen service delivery capabilities, improve planning and system accountability for boards of health, establish workforce standards, and expand access to professional development.

**Children’s Health and Wellness** **(Chapter 124 of the Acts of 2019)** – Last fall, the Legislature passed a bill (House Bill 4210) to improve children’s health and wellness. Signed into law on November 26, 2019, this bill requires MassHealth to provide continuous health care coverage to individuals under the age of 26 who were in the custody of the Department of Children and Families (DCF) on the date of their 18th birthday. The legislation also requires insurance carriers to establish an electronic provider directory containing information on providers’ network plans, in order to ensure that consumers have accurate information about health care providers and insurance plans. The legislation requires the Health Policy Commission to conduct an analysis of children with medical complexity in the Commonwealth to improve insurance coverage and access to health care services for such children. It also establishes a pilot program for childhood behavioral health centers of excellence as well as a task force for pediatric behavioral health screening and legislative commissions on the pediatric workforce and school-based health centers. Finally, the bill requires DCF to report on its efforts to improve and reform the foster care system in the Commonwealth.

**Expanded Telehealth Coverage (House Bill 4888/Senate Bill 2796)** – Most recently, the Legislature approved a bill to improve coverage of telehealth services in response to the coronavirus pandemic and subsequent increase in the use of telehealth services. This legislation requires public and private insurance carriers in the Commonwealth to cover eligible telehealth services, and establishes a temporary period of telehealth service in-network rate parity. The bill also temporarily mandates coverage under all insurance carriers for any emergency and inpatient services related to the novel 2019 coronavirus. Lastly, the bill establishes payment rate parity for behavioral health services delivered by telehealth. A conference committee is now working to resolve the differences between the House and Senate versions of the bill.

Representative Kane filed and secured two amendments to H4888. Amendment #3, Increasing Access to Cancer Clinical Trials, would work to increase enrollment, retention, and minority participation in cancer clinical trials. It would also eliminate financial barriers to participation by informing trial subjects – as well as family, friends and chaperones who accompany them – of their eligibility to be reimbursed for travel expenses and other ancillary costs through government entities, study sponsors, public and private foundations, corporations, and individuals. Amendment #71, titled Rare Disease Advisory Council, would establish a rare disease advisory council in the Commonwealth, which would be a powerful tool in creating a comprehensive rare disease network and bolstering education and attention to the cumulative mass and prevalence of rare diseases. The mission of the Council would be to advise the Governor, General Court, and Department of Public Health on the incidence and status of rare disease in Massachusetts. Both amendments are based in legislation Representative Kane filed this session.

**Maternal Health (House Bill 4818/Senate Bill 2865)** – The House and Senate approved different versions of a bill that aims to reduce racial inequities in maternal health. In Massachusetts, the risk of pregnancy-related deaths for black women is three to four times higher than those of white women. More data is needed to better understand the causes of death and address these inequalities.

The House-approved bill establishes a special legislative commission to study and make recommendations on racial disparities in maternal morbidity. The commission will consist of 23 members, including the chairs of the Joint Committee on Public Health who will serve as co-chairs, and will have one year to file a report with its findings and recommendations. Representative Kane worked with the Minority Leader’s Office to ensure the minority party is represented on the Commission by appointing the ranking minority members of the Joint Committee on Public Health to the Commission. On July 30, the Senate approved its own version of the maternal health bill, which is now under review by the House Committee on Bills in the Third Reading.

**Mosquito-Borne Illness (Chapter 120 of the Acts of 2020)** – The House and Senate passed legislation this year to help coordinate a statewide response to the public health threat posed by Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE), an arbovirus that is generally transmitted to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito. Although it is rare, EEE can cause severe neurological problems and in some instances can be fatal.

Massachusetts recorded 12 human cases of EEE in 2019, including six deaths. There were also nine cases last year involving domestic animals. State officials recently confirmed that mosquitos tested positive for EEE in the towns of Orange on July 1 and Wendell on July 5, which marks the earliest EEE has been detected in the state in the last 20 years. So far, three people have tested positive for EEE and one tested positive for West Nile Virus (WNV) this year, and the Department of Public Health (DPH) has collected 46 positive mosquito samples for EEE, and 32 positive samples for WNV.

Signed into law on July 16, this bill authorizes the State Reclamation and Mosquito Control Board to engage in preventative, management, and eradication methods whenever the Commissioner of Public Health determines that an elevated risk of arbovirus exists or may exist for the current or upcoming year. The bill requires the Board to provide advanced notice before aerial spraying, and requires the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs to establish a procedure to allow property owners to opt out of spraying. The bill also establishes a Mosquito Control for the Twenty-First Century Task Force to research and make recommendations to improve the Commonwealth’s pest management and mosquito control process.

**Opioids and Tobacco** – The Legislature approved language in the FY20 budget (**Chapter 41 of the Acts of 2019**) that established a Municipal Naloxone Bulk Purchase Trust Fund, to provide emergency medical personnel and other municipal first responders with naloxone to be administered to victims of drug overdose.

The Legislature also enacted legislation (House Bill 4196) establishing regulations on the use of tobacco in the Commonwealth. Signed into law on November 27, 2019 as Chapter 133 of the Acts of 2019, *An Act modernizing tobacco control* establishes parity for taxation of electronic nicotine delivery systems (e-cigarettes and vaping products) to mirror those of other tobacco products. The bill requires insurance carriers to cover tobacco cessation services and devices when recommended to a patient by a physician. Proponents of this provision argue that providing tobacco cessation services reduces smoking rates, improves health outcomes, and decreases overall medical costs. The bill also bans the sale and distribution of all flavored tobacco products. Advocates of the flavored tobacco ban argue that 54% of youth smokers and 33% of adult smokers use menthol tobacco, and therefore the flavor ban will significantly reduce the number of tobacco users in the Commonwealth. However, this bill does not prohibit or punish underage possession of tobacco products (flavored or otherwise), and critics of this legislation argue that this bill will not have a significant impact on discouraging youth tobacco use. An amendment that would have applied the same rules for possession of alcohol by a minor to possession of marijuana or tobacco products by a minor failed to pass in the House along party lines, with the Republican caucus voting in the affirmative and the Democratic caucus voting in the negative.

**FOOD INSECURITY**

**Breakfast After the Bell (Chapter 133 of the Acts of 2020)** – According to the Eos Foundation’s Ending Hunger in Our Classrooms 2019 Annual Report, nearly 159,000 low-income students in Massachusetts are not eating a morning meal at school each day. House Bill 4218, *An Act regarding breakfast after the bell*, would require public schools to offer all students a school breakfast after the beginning of the instructional day if at least 60% of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals under the federal National School Lunch Program.

Singled into law on August 8, the Breakfast After the Bell bill allows schools to determine the breakfast service model that best suits its students’ needs, and to consult with non-profit organizations with experience addressing hunger and food security issues and identifying best practices for improving student access to school breakfast. The bill requires the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to conduct an initial assessment of all schools eligible for the school breakfast program by December 31, 2021 so schools are prepared to offer these programs beginning with the 2022-2023 academic year. The bill contains provisions allowing the school breakfast requirement to be waived for 1 year if a school shows it has a breakfast participation rate of 80% or higher using its current delivery model, or if the school demonstrates an extreme hardship related to implementation. H4218 was a Food System Caucus priority bill, and as a founding member and Co-Chair of the Food System Caucus, Representative Kane was especially glad to see it passed by the Legislature, noting that it will make an even bigger impact on Commonwealth students during this time of heightened food insecurity.

**ENVIRONMENT**

**Climate Change Response (House Bill 4933/Senate Bill 2500)** – During the 191st legislative session, the House of Representatives continued its commitment to address and mitigate the effects of climate change in Massachusetts by approving House Bill 4933, *An Act creating a 2050 roadmap to a clean and thriving Commonwealth*. House Bill 4933 codifies the state’s goal to achieve net-zero statewide greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The legislation sets interim targets along the way by requiring emissions to be at least 50% below 1990 levels by 2030, and at least 75% below those levels by 2040. To achieve these goals, the bill directs the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA) to create a roadmap plan outlining possible pathways for that protect – and, where possible, improve – the condition of low and moderate income persons and environmental justice populations. Municipal Lighting Plants (MLP) will need to establish emission standards consistent with these goals.

To further protect these populations, the House bill officially defines environmental justice populations and requires utility companies to create programs allowing for home retrofits, including weatherization and electrification for low-income and fixed-income households. Additionally, the bill increases support for clean energy workforce development programs, improves access to renewable energy and energy efficiency programs for low-income communities, eases solar regulations and requires the state to increase its use of renewable resources for its electricity needs. During debate, the House adopted amendments increasing the total procurement of offshore wind power by an additional 2,000 megawatts and incorporating natural carbons solutions in achieving our climate goals.

The House climate bill, along with the Senate’s version (Senate Bill 2500), are currently in a conference committee, led by the co-chairs of the Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy.

**GreenWorks (House Bill 3997)** – On July 24, 2019 the House approved legislation that would provide over $1.3 billion in state grants for cities and towns to invest in climate change adaptation and infrastructure improvements. House Bill 3997, *An Act relative to GreenWorks*, establishes a GreenWorks Infrastructure Program in the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, while authorizing $1 billion in bond funding to assist communities with climate change resiliency issues. Grants will be made available to cities and towns for projects located on public lands or a public right-of-way that improve climate adaption and resiliency, mitigate climate change impacts, reduce carbon emissions, and promote energy efficiency.

Ten percent of the available grant funding each year will be set aside for towns with populations of 7,000 or fewer residents. These towns will be eligible to receive one grant every three fiscal years, capped at $1 million. Two or more eligible towns can submit a joint application for funding to cover a single regional project, subject to the same limitations.

The GreenWorks bill also provides an additional $325 million in targeted investments, including:

* a $100 million matching grant program to help cities and towns deploy municipal microgrid energy systems;
* a $125 million grant program to encourage municipalities and regional transit authorities to convert their fleets to electric vehicles;
* a $20 million grant program for municipalities to hire sustainability coordinators to implement and monitor projects awarded funding under the GreenWorks Infrastructure Program;
* $50 million to establish a Green Resiliency Fund to provide matching funds for GreenWorks projects, resiliency improvements and resiliency investments; and
* $30 million for the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources’ MOR-EV electric vehicle rebate program

The GreenWorks bill is currently under review by the Senate Committee on Bonding, Capital Expenditures and State Assets.

**Sewage Overflows (House Bill 4921)** – On July 30, the House supported the passage of House Bill 4921, *An Act promoting awareness of sewage pollution in public waters*, which requires the public be notified when untreated sewage overflows into a waterway. This bill requires operators of a sewage system to issue a public advisory within 2 hours of a sewage discharge and every 8 hours thereafter, until the discharge has ended. A final advisory is also required within 2 hours of the conclusion of the discharge. The bill is currently in the Senate Committee on Ways and Means.

**EDUCATION**

**Student Opportunity Act (Chapter 132 of the Acts of 2019)** – On November 20, 2019 the House and Senate finalized a comprehensive education reform bill to increase Chapter 70 education aid to cities and towns by $1.5 billion over the next seven years. The bill also establishes strong accountability standards by requiring school districts to develop 3-year plans to close student achievement gaps and to file annual progress reports beginning in 2020 with the Commissioner of Education, who will have the power to review these plans and to require amendments if needed.

The Student Opportunity Act, which was signed into law on November 26, 2019, will help to ensure that all Massachusetts students have access to a quality education, regardless of where they live. It represents the first major overhaul of the state’s education funding formula since the passage of the landmark 1993 Education Reform Act.

In addition to raising the annual cap for school building assistance projects to $800 million, with future caps adjusted for inflation, the Student Opportunity Act expands funding for out-of-district special education transportation costs and establishes a timeline for fully funding charter school reimbursements by FY23. It also increases special education enrollment and cost assumptions to more accurately reflect district enrollment and costs, and creates a Data Advisory Commission to ensure that resources are being allocated effectively at the district and school levels.

The new law incorporates the 2015 recommendations of the Foundation Budget Review Commission by revising the education funding formula to take into account the needs of English language learners, low-income students, special education programming, and the municipal costs associated with providing employee and retiree health care benefits. It also requires the Legislature to convene the Commission at least once every 10 years to review how the foundation budget is calculated and to recommend any changes as needed.

The Student Opportunity Act also requires the Secretary of Education to establish statewide and regional targets for student preparedness for workforce and postsecondary education, and sets financial literacy standards so all public elementary and secondary school students have an understanding of personal finances.

Unfortunately, Representative Kane noted, the continued uncertainty over state finances and the emergence of a coronavirus economy may require temporarily delaying the implementation of the Student Opportunity Act.

**College Closure Protections (Chapter 113 of the Acts of 2019)** – Following a series of high-profile college closures and mergers, the House and Senate took steps to protect students attending financially struggling colleges. Signed into law on November 14, 2019, *An Act to support improved financial stability in higher education* gives the Board of Higher Education a greater oversight role in monitoring the financial well-being of the state’s colleges and universities. It also requires schools at risk of imminent closure to prepare contingency plans to notify students and pending applicants of their options. These changes will ensure that students have advance notification if the school they are attending or applying to is facing potential closure so they can make informed decisions to complete their degree.

Under the new law, all public and private colleges and universities must immediately notify the Board of Higher Education of any known financial liabilities or risks that could result in the imminent closure of the institution. Schools are also required to prepare contingency plans which must include: arrangements for students to complete their program of study in the event the school closes; the furnishing of a bond with surety or a letter of credit to refund any deposits made by new or returning students; and information about the rights and responsibilities of student loan borrowers. Schools that fail to comply will be subject to fines and other penalties.

**VETERANS**

**Deborah Sampson Memorial Commission (House Bill 4179/Senate Bill 2883)** – On November 6, 2019, the House approved the creation of a special commission to recommend a suitable memorial at the State House to honor Deborah Sampson, a Plympton resident who served in the Continental Army during the American Revolutionary War. Sampson enlisted in the 4th Massachusetts Regiment in 1782 under the name of “Robert Shurtleff,” and holds the distinction of being the only woman to earn a full military pension for participation in the Continental Army. Representative Kane said establishing a permanent memorial for Sampson will help to highlight the important role women have played in our nation’s founding and their contributions throughout our country’s history. Representative Kane also noted that Deborah Sampson was one of her own personal heroines growing up!

The 15-member commission, which will be co-chaired by the House and Senate chairs of the Joint Committee on Veterans and Federal Affairs, will consist of six legislators, the Commissioner of Veterans’ Services, and Massachusetts Adjutant General Gary W. Keefe, as well as seven gubernatorial appointees. These appointees will include a woman veteran and representatives from the Women Veterans’ Network in the Department of Veterans’ Services; the Advisory Committee on Women Veterans; the Department of Massachusetts Veterans of Foreign Wars of The United States, Inc.; The American Legion, Department of Massachusetts, Inc.; the AMVETS Department of Massachusetts Service Foundation, Inc.; and the Disabled American Veterans, Department of Massachusetts, Inc. The Senate amended and engrossed the bill on July 31, 2020 as Senate Bill 2883, which is now being reviewed by the House Committee on Bills in the Third Reading.

**Veterans’ Health Issues (House Bill 4177)** – The House has proposed a continuing education program at the University of Massachusetts Medical School to help train higher education counselors to address deployment-related health conditions among Massachusetts veterans, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Engrossed by the House on November 6, 2019, House Bill 4177, *An Act relative to the training of higher education counselors on deployment-related health conditions*, would require clinical and non-clinical counselors at Massachusetts’ public colleges and universities to complete the continuing education program, including staff and faculty in admissions offices, counseling centers, health services and academic advising centers. In addition to receiving training to help recognize the symptoms of depression, suicidal thoughts, substance use disorders, PTSD and other deployment-related health conditions, counselors would also receive information on the resources available for veterans and service members and how to provide referrals for treatment. The continuing education requirement will benefit both active-duty service members and returning veterans who are pursuing a college degree. House Bill 4177 is currently pending before the Senate Committee on Ways and Means.

**PROTECTIONS FOR DISABLED INDIVIDUALS**

**Nicky’s Law (Chapter 19 of the Acts of 2020)** – House Bill 4296, also known as “Nicky’s Law”, establishes a statewide registry to protect disabled individuals from abusive caregivers. It directs the Disabled Persons Protection Commission (DPPC) to create a confidential registry that will include the names of all care providers found to have abused a disabled individual.

Signed into law on February 13, Nicky’s Law is named after Nicky Chan, a non-verbal individual who was beaten while attending a day program for people with intellectual disabilities in Millbury, Massachusetts. Nicky’s mother, Cheryl, has been advocating for the creation of a registry since learning Massachusetts had no mechanism in place to prevent an accused abuser from being rehired elsewhere. Representative Kane, who serves as a trustee for the Seven Hills Foundation and sits on their Human Rights Core Committee, was a co-sponsor of this sadly necessary legislation.

Under Nicky’s Law, the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) and employers will be required to consult the registry before hiring a caregiver, and prohibited from employing any person who is listed on the registry. Employers who fail to comply with the law could face a fine of up to $5,000, the revocation of their license, the forfeiture of their state contract, or any combination of these penalties.

In FY19, the State Police Detective Unit assigned to the DPPC reviewed 13,102 allegations of abuse, with 2,214 of these reports referred to the District Attorneys for further review or assignment for a criminal investigation. According to The Arc of Massachusetts, less than 10% of cases referred to District Attorneys actually result in charges against the abuser.

**PROTECTIONS FOR CHILDREN**

**Expanding DCF’s Reporting Requirements and Establishing a Foster Parents’ Bill of Rights (House Bill 4852/Senate Bill 2884)** – House Bill 4852, *An Act relative to accountability for vulnerable children and families*, which was engrossed by the House on July 9, would require DCF to develop and update specific case management policies to improve its operations and to ensure the safety of the children under its care. The bill would also move the board that investigates the deaths of children in state care from the Chief Medical Examiner’s Office to the Office of the Child Advocate.

Among the reporting provisions included in House Bill 4852 is a requirement that DCF file an annual report detailing the outcomes of children and young adults leaving or aging out of DCF care and custody, and whether they have secured housing, employment, and post-secondary education. The bill also requires DCF to report annually on its fair hearing process and cases, and directs the department’s Ombudsman to annually disclose any questions or concerns received during the previous fiscal year.

In response to the COVID-19 global pandemic, the bill requires DCF to analyze and report on various aspects of the child welfare and education system to understand the novel coronavirus’ impact on vulnerable children. It also mandates monthly updates on child abuse and neglect reports made to the department, and directs DCF to develop and implement a public information campaign to increase awareness of child abuse and neglect during the State of Emergency.

A centerpiece of House Bill 4852 is the creation of a Foster Parents’ Bill of Rights, which is designed to articulate specific rights and responsibilities to help DCF recruit and retain foster parents. Among other things, the proposed Bill of Rights would require pre-service training for foster parents and the creation of a 24-hour emergency hotline that can be accessed even when DCF offices are closed.

On July 31, 2020, the Senate approved a redrafted version of the DCF reporting bill, Senate Bill 2884, which would require DCF to publish annual reports on children in its care, establish a three-year safety and well-being plan, and study existing protections for vulnerable minors. Like the House bill, the Senate version includes language granting new supports to foster parents and outlines a section called the “Foster Parents’ Bill of Rights. Senate Bill 2884 is currently being reviewed by the House Committee on Bills in the Third Reading.

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**Economic Development Bond Bill (House Bill 4887/Senate Bill 2874)** – In late July, the House and Senate both passed versions of an economic bond bill known as *An Act to enable partnerships for growth*. Originally introduced by the Governor in March, the Senate and House both made significant changes to the legislation, which is currently in conference committee. The legislation was taken up to provide financial support to struggling residents, small businesses, restaurants, and other entities suffering as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Both versions of the bill contain several provisions to support housing production, including the language of the Governor’s housing choice bill, in order to address the housing crisis, which has been exacerbated by the global pandemic. Each version also contains various provisions to support economic development, community development, and workforce initiatives.

**Capital Authorizations:** Both the Senate and House versions of the bill contain various capital authorizations for the purpose of supporting community development, housing production, rehabilitation of blighted properties, workforce initiatives, small business, and climate resilience. The bills vary in the amounts given towards each initiative, and how priority for these funds are determined. Both bills also contain various capital authorizations for municipalities.

**Housing:** In an effort to promote the production of affordable housing, both versions of the jobs bill include the Governor’s housing choice legislation. The language lowers the threshold for certain local zoning changes from a two-thirds vote to a simple majority. This includes zoning for smart growth zoning districts, mixed-use housing, multi-family housing, and transit-oriented development situated near rapid transit, commuter rail, and bus and ferry terminals.

The House also adopted language permitting the addition of 1 member to a redevelopment authority, who shall be a tenant member appointed by the board of selectmen. The amendment also establishes a local option, which would provide tenants who are part of tenant associations the right of first refusal to purchase a property. The amendment was widely opposed by Republican members in an effort to prevent undue requirements from being placed on local redevelopment authorities, and to ensure that local control is maintained in the state. Lastly, the House bill increases the annual Housing Development Incentive Program cap from $10 million to $30 million.

**Sports Betting:** The House version of the bill, unlike the Senate’s, includes language which effectively legalizes sports betting in the state, including collegiate and professional sports. The bill requires that all bettors be at least 21 years of age, and directs the Massachusetts Gaming Commission (MGC) to regulate sports wagering. Under the legislation, the MGC is also responsible for licensing operators to accept wagers, including the state’s casinos, racetracks, and fantasy sports companies such as DraftKings. All operators will be required to pay an initial $25,000 application fee, followed by a $100,000 renewal fee every 5 years. Additionally, the bill establishes, for the privilege of holding a license to operate sports wagering, an excise tax equal to 15% of the operator’s adjusted gross sports wagering receipts from the operation of sports wagering. The funds from this excise tax would be put towards various funds that support the workforce, restaurants, youth, local aid, and public health.

**Restaurant Support:** The House version of the bond bill establishes a Distressed Restaurant Trust Fund to be distributed by the Secretary of the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development (EOHED). The money in the fund, which will receive money from sports betting taxes, will be expended for a competitive one-time grant program to assist distressed restaurants in the Commonwealth financially impacted by COVID-19. Grants will be limited to $15,000 per recipient. Additionally, the House adopted a consolidated amendment, which relieves the tax burden and fees on restaurants, and limits third party delivery fees. The Senate version of the bill contains a different approach to supporting restaurants impacted by COVID-19, by authorizing $20 million for a restaurant capital grants program, giving preference to independently owned and seasonal restaurants.

**Women’s Rights History Trail**: Representative Kane was successful in securing the adoption of Amendment #15 in the House version of the bill, which she co-filed with her colleagues Representatives Dykema, Gregoire, McMurtry, and Ferguson. Amendment #15, titled Women’s Rights History Trail, is based on legislation Representative Kane co-sponsored this session. The Amendment would create a Women’s Rights History Trail in the Commonwealth consisting of sites and properties associated with the struggle for women’s rights and women’s suffrage. The Amendment also would establish the Women’s Rights History Trail Task Force, which would have one year from the signing of the bill to plan how to best implement and promote the History Trail.

**TRANSPORTATION**

**Transportation Borrowing (House Bill 4547/Senate Bill 2836)** – On March 5, the House engrossed House Bill 4547, *An Act authorizing and accelerating transportation investment*, providing for over $18 billion in bonded transportation investments. At the time, this measure was paired with a transportation revenue measure, aimed at increasing fees from a gasoline tax to transportation network companies, in order to complement the significant level of borrowing. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, transportation officials and key legislators have been committed to passing the transportation bonding bill as a stand-alone measure in order to strongly invest in the Commonwealth’s transportation sector as the state recovers from the pandemic and subsequent economic recession.

During floor debate, Representative Kane successfully secured funding for several local projects, including $1,400,000 for the reconstruction of the Toblin Hill Bridge in Shrewsbury and $250,000 for parking improvements at the Commuter Rail station in Westborough. Representative Kane also worked with her colleagues Representative Dykema and Representative Gregoire to secure an amendment creating a multi-stakeholder standing working group to investigate, develop, implement, and coordinate a mitigation plan for the Allston I-90 corridor before and during the construction of the Allston Multimodal Project. The amendment ensures that the Stakeholder Group will work throughout the duration of the Project in an attempt to mitigate the detrimental effects the 10-year Project will have on commuters from Shrewsbury and Westborough.

A conference committee, formed on July 23, has been tasked with reconciling the differences between the House engrossed bond bill (House Bill 4547) and the Senate engrossed bond bill (Senate Bill 2836). In addition to the roughly $500 million borrowing level differences among the two branches, the conference committee must deliberate on whether to keep the myriad additional outside sections included in Senate Bill 2836.

Additionally worth nothing, each bill has a different local funding mechanism for more targeted, regional transportation investments. House Bill 4547 advocates for Supplemental Infrastructure Financing for Transportation (SIFTs), a funding mechanism which mainly relies on tax incremental increases over time for financing. Senate Bill 2836 advocates for local and regional ballot initiatives, which, unlike SIFTs, are authorized to impose tax surcharges in the form of sales, meals, or other localized taxes in order to finance transportation projects. The specific path that the conference committee wants to take remains to be seen. However, it is clear that both branches are interested in investing significant amounts of capital funding to repair and expand the Commonwealth’s transportation sector while the state recovers from the pandemic.

**Transportation Revenue (House Bill 4508)** – Prior to the outbreak of COVID-19, the House of Representatives debated and engrossed House Bill 4508, *An Act relative to transportation finance*. This piece of legislation was aimed at generating roughly $600 million in revenue by implementing a series of tax policy changes to help address transportation improvements in the Commonwealth. The bill proposes to amend the corporate minimum tax, gasoline taxes, assess fees on ride hailing services, and regulate car sharing services and rental car companies. House Republicans opposed these measures and offered multiple amendments, but the legislation was ultimately adopted by a vote of 114-40. The bill remains in the Senate Committee on Ways and Means.

**MISCELLANEOUS BILLS**

**FGM Ban (Chapter 149 of the Acts of 2020)** – On July 30, the House enacted House Bill 4606, *An Act relative to the penalties for the crime of female genital mutilation*, which was signed into law on August 6 as Chapter 149 of the Acts of 2020. The bill criminalizes the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM), and empowers the Commissioner of Public Health to develop and administer a program of education for the prevention of FGM. With the passage of this law, Massachusetts is now the 39th state to ban FGM, two years after a U.S. District Court judge overturned a 1996 federal FGM ban as unconstitutional based on the Commerce Clause, leaving enforcement up to the states.

**Women’s Rights History Trail (House Bill 4076)** – On September 18, 2019 the House went on record in support of establishing a Women’s Rights History Trail to promote education and awareness of the struggle for women’s rights in Massachusetts. House Bill 4076, which Representative Kane co-filed, envisions a history trail that includes “properties and sites that are historically and thematically associated with the struggle for women’s rights and women’s suffrage.” The bill calls for a 13-member task force to solicit public input and provide recommendations for specific sites to include on the history trail and other ways to “commemorate individuals who reflect racial, ethnic, cultural and economic diversity.”

To promote the trail program, the bill calls for the distribution of educational materials, including handbooks, maps and interpretive guides. The Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism will also develop vacation itineraries for the trail program that will include surrounding attractions, restaurants and exhibits tied in to the historical theme of the trail. House Bill 4076 is currently under review by the Senate Committee on Ways and Means.

**IT Bond Bill (Chapter 151 of the Acts of 2020)** – On July 31, the conference committee tasked with producing a deal on a General Governmental IT Bond Bill released its final report, which was signed into law on August 7. The first IT bill in several years for Massachusetts provides for over $1.5 billion in bonding investments for a myriad of departments and programs. These investments include broad-based technical infrastructure upgrades as well as focused investments in a number of areas, including: a $20 million grant program for law enforcement agencies that invest in body-warn cameras for their police officers; $115 million for municipal public library grants, mainly to improve IT accessibility; and $37 million for the Food Security Program. The Food Security Program is to provide liquidity for the infrastructure needs of farms; retailers; fisheries; food system businesses and food distribution channels such as food banks; elder services; and community supported agriculture farms. The Program was developed out of recommendations made by the COVID-19 Command Center’s Food Security Task Force, which Representative Kane serves on a Legislative Delegate alongside colleague and fellow Food System Caucus Co-Chair Senator Comerford.

**Janus Decision/Collective Bargaining Dues (Chapter 73 of the Acts of 2019)** – Last summer, in response to the Supreme Court decision in *Janus v. AFSCME*, which barred unions from charging non-member employees’ agency fees, the Legislature passed House Bill 3854, *An Act relative to collective bargaining dues*. The legislation permits employee organizations to require a non-member employee to pay reasonable costs and fees for arbitration and negotiation on the employees’ behalf. The legislation also contains provisions which stipulate conditions concerning privacy, executive representatives’ responsibilities, and the authorization of payroll deductions. Additionally, the legislation ensures that employees will have the opportunity to learn about the benefits and services available to them.

The bill was widely supported by both the House and Senate for the purpose of securing employee protections. During the House debate of the bill, the Republican caucus supported many amendments that were filed in response to privacy concerns. The various amendments would have limited the amount of an employee’s personal data that would have been accessible to unions; however, those amendments were struck down. Republican members also largely supported amendments to the bill filed by the Governor, which contained provisions intended to protect the privacy of public employees and to subject exclusive representatives to public employers’ technology use policies. These amendments were ultimately rejected by the House.

**Hands-Free Cell Phone Use (Chapter 122 of the Acts of 2019)** – On November 25, 2019, Governor Baker signed House Bill 4203, *An Act requiring the hands-free use of mobile telephones while driving*, which prohibits drivers from holding a cell phone while operating a motor vehicle and requires they be used only in hands-free mode. In addition to addressing the public safety issues associated with the subject, the Legislature sought to proactively address racial profiling that may be occurring upon the execution of this act, as more frequent citations for cell phone use occur.

Under the hands-free law:

* Fines for the violation of hands free provisions are $100 for a first offense, $250 for a second offense, and $500 for a third or subsequent offense. Violations are a sur-chargeable offense upon the third or subsequent offense.
* Data collection occurs from any issued Massachusetts Uniform Citation and will include demographic characteristics, details on the infraction, whether a search was involved or whether the stop resulted in a warning, citation, or arrest. Data collection will not include any identifying information for individual offenders, or law enforcement officers involved in said traffic stop.
* Data analyzation will be conducted by an outside entity with expertise in such research and will be compiled into an annual report, which will be transferred to the Secretary of Public Safety and Security, who is then charged with making the report available to the public. The Secretary must also conduct a study to determine if there are better methods for collecting citation data, and must conduct at least three open-forum style meetings in different parts of the state following the release of the annual report.

**OCPF Reform (Chapter 123 of the Acts of 2019)** – On November 26, 2019, Governor Baker signed House Bill 4087, *An Act relative to campaign finance*. Under this new system, all candidates for state office are now required to designate a bank to serve as a depository for their campaign finance funds. Banks will periodically report to OCPF on campaign account balances as well as transaction information. Candidates must also deposit all receipts into their depository within seven days of receiving the contribution.

Treasurers are required to deposit contributions within 7 days of receipt. Candidates will be required to produce monthly reports to OCPF. Additionally, certain candidates are required to provide a list of contributions of more than $50, including names and addresses of contributors, and for those who give over $200, the occupation and employer information of the contributor.

The director of OCPF is charged with promulgating rules regarding soliciting campaign funds using social media and other online sources. The bill also creates a study commission to examine the feasibility of allowing individuals to pay for childcare services with campaign funds.

**Lift the Cap on Kids (Chapter 11 of the Acts of 2019)** – House Bill 104, *An Act to lift the cap on kids*, amends the Commonwealth's 1995 welfare reform law by ensuring that parents enrolled in the Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC) program will receive assistance for each child, regardless of whether the child was conceived or born after the parent began receiving aid. On April 8, 2019, Governor Baker returned the bill with a veto, asking that the elimination of the cap be accompanied by other TAFDC reforms to align the eligibility determination with federal standards and support recipients as they return to work. Despite the Governor’s objections, the bill became law on April 25, 2019 after both the House and Senate overrode his veto with the necessary two-thirds support, making Massachusetts the ninth state to repeal such rules, which remain in place in 15 other states.

**Conversion Therapy (Chapter 8 of the Acts of 2019)** – House Bill 140, *An Act relative to abusive practices to change sexual orientation and gender identity in minors*, prohibits any licensed mental health professional from forcing minors to change sexual orientation or gender identity, defines advertisements promoting conversion therapy as deceptive practices violating consumer protections, and protects therapies to facilitate an individual’s coping, social support, and identity exploration and development. This bill was signed into law on April 8, 2019, making Massachusetts the 16th state to institute a conversion therapy ban.

**Host Community Agreements (House Bill 4367)** – On February 5, the House passed House Bill 4367, *An Act relative to host community agreements*, which seeks to reform the oversight authority held by the Cannabis Control Commission (CCC) as it pertains to local host community agreements. The bill amends the process of municipal governments and marijuana companies entering into host community agreements when establishing marijuana businesses. It also elaborates on what the community impact fee encompasses, and further invests more regulatory authority and oversight responsibilities in the CCC to oversee the creation of host community agreements and the administering of community impact fees.

Representative Kane voted against the bill, citing concerns over unnecessary bureaucratic control over municipal agreements. The bill was referred to the Senate Committee on Ways and Means on February 10.

**Industrial Hemp (House Bill 3535)** – On June 19, 2019, the House engrossed House Bill 3535, *An Act expanding agriculture preservation restrictions for hemp cultivation*. This bill expanded the definition of "horticultural use" by adding hemp production to the list of acceptable uses of land for agricultural purposes, allowing for industrial hemp cultivation in the Commonwealth and providing further economic opportunities. The Senate has yet to act on the bill.

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