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Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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Representative Kane supports passage of \$58.1 billion state budget for Fiscal Year 2025

BOSTON – State Representative Hannah Kane (R-Shrewsbury) recently supported a \$58.1 billion state budget for Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) which calls for increased local aid and the implementation of several new policy initiatives, including online Lottery sales and a statewide tax amnesty program.

Filed on July 18 as House Bill 4800, the final budget reflects a compromise spending plan negotiated by a six-member conference committee that worked to reconcile the differences between the House budget that was passed in April and the Senate version that was passed in May. The final conference committee report was enacted by both branches on July 19 and is now on Governor Maura Healey’s desk for her review and signature.

Representative Kane said the budget provides for a statewide total of \$6.9 billion in Chapter 70 education aid, an increase of more than \$319 million over last fiscal year, with minimum per pupil aid set at \$104. It also provides for \$1.3 billion in Unrestricted General Government Aid (UGGA) to support a wide range of municipal services, which represents a one-year increase of more than \$38 million. Representative Kane noted the new budget will provide Shrewsbury with \$21,595,260 in direct education aid and \$3,430,063 in unrestricted state aid, and Westborough with \$12,309,756 in direct education aid and \$1,426,899 in unrestricted state aid, for Fiscal Year 2025 to fund police, firefighters and other critical municipal services.

During the initial House budget debate in April, Representative Kane successfully advocated for the inclusion of several local initiatives for her district, including \$50,000 for Shrewsbury Youth and Family Services, \$10,000 for accessibility improvements at Dean Park, and \$10,000 to restore the gazebo in the Shrewsbury Town Common. In addition, Representative Kane and Representative Kate Donaghue (D-Westborough) secured \$27,000 to modernize radios in Westborough’s ambulances. Representative Kane also supported local projects added during the Senate budget debate, including \$50,000 to increase environmental police patrols in and around Flint Pond, \$25,000 for a comprehensive code review and building assessment in Shrewsbury, \$25,000 for improvements to Maple Avenue Park, and \$57,000 for gear and equipment for the Westborough Fire Department. Funding for those projects was retained in the final conference committee report.

In addition to local priorities, Representative Kane successfully advocated for several statewide projects. Representative Kane and Representative Jay Livingstone (D-Boston) co-filed an amendment during the House debate to re-appropriate funding appropriated in previous fiscal years for the replacement of stolen SNAP benefits, which was included in the conference committee report. As the House chair of the Massachusetts Caucus of Women Legislators (MCWL), Representative Kane supported an amendment allocating \$50,000 to the MCWL for the celebration of the Caucus’ 50th anniversary. The Food System Caucus, which Representative Kane co-founded and co-chairs, also supported funding for programs to reduce food insecurity and strengthen farms and fisheries in Massachusetts. The budget released from the conference committee includes \$170 million for universal school meals, \$15 million for the Healthy Incentives Program (HIP), \$15 million for the Food Security Infrastructure Grant (FSIG) program, \$42,360,000 for the Massachusetts Emergency Food Assistance Program (MEFAP), \$1 million for farm-to-school grants and school wellness coaching, \$800,000 for Buy Local

organizations, and \$500,000 for Hunger-Free Campus grants. The Food System Caucus also successfully advocated for \$250,000 for local food policy councils, \$900,000 for Project Bread's FoodSource Hotline and \$700,000 for Project Bread's Child Nutrition Outreach Program, \$300,000 for the Massachusetts Food Trust, \$120,000 for Massachusetts Farm to School, \$100,000 for the cliff effect pilot program, \$150,000 for UMass Extension, \$100,000 for a senior farmshare program, and \$25,000 for Rachel's Table.

Representative Kane noted that the budget contains additional education-related funding assistance for cities and towns, including \$198.9 million for charter school reimbursements, \$99.5 million for regional school transportation, \$1 million for non-resident regional transportation, and \$28.7 million for homeless student transportation. The budget also provides \$493.2 million in Special Education Circuit Breaker reimbursements, as well as \$16 million in Rural School Assistance Grants.

The FY25 budget allocates \$45 million in supplemental road and bridge funding under the Chapter 90 program. The Legislature had previously allocated \$200 million for this local infrastructure program as a standalone bill that was signed into law in May.

Representative Kane noted that the budget legalizes online Lottery sales in Massachusetts, which is expected to generate \$100 million in FY25, but includes restrictions limiting online purchases to individuals who are 21 or older and language prohibiting advertising that targets minors. A portion of the revenues generated through online Lottery sales would be allocated to the Commonwealth Cares for Children (C3) grants to support early education and care programs. In addition, the budget authorizes the use of debit cards for Lottery purchases, which is expected to bring in an additional \$25 million in revenues.

The budget also includes provisions for the state to offer a one-time tax amnesty program that would run for 60 days, with the timing and scope of the program to be determined by the Commissioner of Revenue.

Representative Kane said the FY25 budget makes significant investments in education and transportation by providing:

- \$170 million to fund universal free school meals in Massachusetts' schools;
- \$18.5 million in Head Start grants;
- \$20 million for early literacy initiatives;
- \$3 million in genocide education grants;
- \$1 million in grants to prevent hate crimes in the Commonwealth's public schools;
- \$117.5 million to provide free community college access to students seeking their first baccalaureate degree;
- \$80 million in financial aid support for Massachusetts residents attending state universities;
- \$65 million to increase rates for early education and care providers;
- \$127 million in operating support for the MBTA;
- \$60 million for MBTA capital investments;
- \$36 million for an MBTA workforce safety reserve;
- \$20 million to implement a low-income fare program at the MBTA; and
- \$110 million in funding and grants for Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs), \$30 million of which will be used for the statewide implementation of free fare service

Other funding initiatives in the budget highlighted by Representative Kane include:

- \$29.6 million in grants for local Councils on Aging, with language increasing the per elder assistance rate from \$14 to \$15;
- \$113 million to assist local housing authorities;
- \$53 million for the Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) program to compensate municipalities for non-taxable state-owned land;
- \$20 million to support municipal libraries;

- \$19 million for regional library local aid;
- \$6.2 million for technology and automated resources networks;
- \$26.9 million for the Massachusetts Cultural Council;
- \$57.3 million for the HomeBASE program;
- \$231.7 million for the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP);
- \$197.4 million for Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT);
- \$496.2 million for Transitional Assistance to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC);
- \$42.4 million for the Massachusetts Emergency Food Assistance Program;
- \$15 million for the Healthy Incentives Program;
- \$212.7 million for substance use disorder treatment and intervention services;
- \$131.4 million for children’s mental health services;
- \$14.7 million for maternal and child health;
- \$390 million to support direct care providers;
- \$622.4 million for adult support services offered through the Department of Mental Health;
- \$625 million for nursing facility Medicaid rates; and
- \$10 million for the Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund to help unemployed and underemployed workers secure high-paying jobs

Governor Healey has until July 29 to review and sign the Fiscal Year 2025 budget into law.

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