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Representative Kane supports \$61.4B state budget for Fiscal Year 2026

Advocates for multiple policy reforms to assist cities, towns and taxpayers

BOSTON – State Representative Hannah Kane (R-Shrewsbury) recently supported a \$61.4 billion House budget proposal that holds the line on taxes, expands state education aid to municipalities, and sets state spending priorities for the new fiscal year that begins on July 1.

The House engrossed its spending plan by a vote of 151-6 on April 30, after three days of floor debate to consider a total of 1,650 budget amendments filed by members. Among those were several Republican-sponsored policy proposals to assist cities and towns dealing with the implications of the MBTA Communities Act, facilitate law enforcement's compliance with US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) criminal detainer requests, delay enforcement of the advanced clean cars regulations governing the state's transition to electric vehicles, and limit eligibility for the state's emergency shelter system to citizens who have resided in the Commonwealth for at least six months, among other initiatives.

During floor debate, Representative Kane successfully advocated for the inclusion of several local initiatives for her district. Included in the House budget proposal is funding for Shrewsbury Youth & Family Services at \$75,000 and \$50,000 for Shrewsbury's 300th anniversary celebration. Representative Kane and Representative Kate Donaghue (D-Westborough) co-filed successful amendments that allocate \$12,126 for AEDs in Westborough police patrol cars and \$75,000 for repairs to the Piccadilly Brook Bridge.

Representative Kane noted the House budget includes \$7.1 billion in Chapter 70 education aid, an increase of \$257 million over current spending levels, along with a \$240 million minimum aid supplement increasing per pupil aid to \$150 per student, double the amount included in Governor Healey's budget proposal. A consolidated amendment adopted during floor debate also increased the minimum per pupil aid funding for vocational, agricultural and technical schools from \$104 per pupil to \$150 per pupil. Representative Kane noted Shrewsbury will receive \$22,487,010 and Westborough will receive \$12,875,256 in direct education aid under the House budget proposal.

Representative Kane criticized the House Ways and Means Committee's decision to level fund Unrestricted General Government Aid (UGGA) at \$1.3 billion, noting that communities rely on this funding to support a variety of municipal programs and services, including teachers, police, firefighters, libraries, and senior centers. To help assist cities and towns, she backed a Republican-sponsored amendment to redirect \$10 million in funding allocated for prisoner phone calls to supplement UGGA, but it failed on a vote of 26-128. Under the current House budget proposal, Shrewsbury is in line to receive \$3,430,063 and Westborough would receive \$1,426,899 in unrestricted local aid in the upcoming fiscal year.

According to Representative Kane, the House budget offers additional financial support to local communities and school districts by funding the Special Education Circuit Breaker at \$484.7 million. It also allocates \$198.9

million for charter school reimbursement, along with \$122.1 million for regional school transportation, \$28.7 million for homeless student transportation and \$190 million for universal school meals.

Representative Kane also supported the inclusion of retirement-plus language for teachers, which was adopted as part of a consolidated amendment on a vote of 154-3. This provision extends a one-time superannuation retirement benefit option to those teachers who became eligible for membership in the teachers' retirement system before July 1, 2001, but did not previously participate in the program. This corrective language was included to assist those individuals who were not properly notified of this retirement benefit when it was first offered, or did not realize they qualified at the time.

Representative Kane said she was pleased the House budget contains no new taxes, as the House opted not to pursue the \$471 million in tax increases included in Governor Healey's budget proposal.

During floor debate, Representative Kane supported a series of reform amendments offered by the House Republican Caucus, including the following proposals:

MUNICIPAL TAX AMNESTY – This amendment would allow cities and towns to generate additional revenues by authorizing the state's first municipal tax amnesty program since 2003, to run for two consecutive months, with the actual dates set by the local legislative body. Under this proposal, communities would be able to waive any or all penalties, fees, charges and accrued interest owed on local property taxes and excise taxes, providing an incentive for taxpayers to pay the original tax assessment amount that was due in full. The amendment was rejected on a roll call vote of 25-132.

NO COST PRISONER CALLS REFORMS – This amendment would repeal the 2023 no cost calls law, which provides unlimited phone calls for inmates at county and state correctional facilities, and redirect the \$10 million in funding set aside for this program in the House budget to support unrestricted local aid for cities and towns. It also would establish a commission to study the fiscal challenges posed by this program and its impact on prisoner participation in state funded re-entry programs. The state's sheriffs have raised concerns about the program's rising costs, with Norfolk County Sheriff Patrick McDermott testifying before the Joint Ways and Means Committee in March that the program had already run up \$12.5 million in costs in Fiscal Year 2025. Representative Kane said a study is needed to reevaluate the cost burden of the no cost calls program and to ensure that taxpayer dollars are used more efficiently and effectively. This amendment was rejected on a roll call vote of 26-128.

CONSTITUTIONALITY OF CHAPTER 40B – This amendment would direct the House of Representatives to request an Opinion of the Justices regarding the constitutionality of the state's Chapter 40B zoning law. Created in 1969, this law was intended to promote more affordable housing development, but critics have argued that it undermines local control by allowing developers to bypass a community's zoning regulations governing density requirements. This amendment was rejected on a vote of 26-129.

FEDERAL LAW ENFORCEMENT COOPERATION – This amendment, which was modeled after legislation originally filed by former Governor Charlie Baker, provides a mechanism for law enforcement and the courts to detain individuals for United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) who pose a direct threat to public safety. Representative Kane said the legislation came in response to the 2017 *Commonwealth v. Lunn* decision, in which the Supreme Judicial Court determined the authority to honor these detainer requests is not expressly permitted under current statutes. The amendment would allow for the detainment of individuals for possible immigration violations for up to 12 hours upon receipt of a written request and warrant from ICE. This authorization is limited to ICE detainer requests for individuals who pose a threat to public safety for engaging in, or being suspected of engaging in, specific crimes, including terrorism or espionage, criminal street gang activity, sexual abuse or exploitation, human trafficking, unlawful firearm possession, and drug distribution or trafficking. The amendment was rejected on a vote of 25-130.

RIGHT TO SHELTER REFORM – This amendment would place further restrictions on the state’s right to shelter law by limiting participation in the Commonwealth’s emergency housing assistance program to U.S. citizens who have resided in Massachusetts for at least six months. Representative Kane said this would help restore the original intent of the law by ensuring that Massachusetts residents in need have access to emergency shelter. The amendment was rejected on a vote of 27-129.

PRESERVING PUBLIC SAFETY GRANT FUNDING FOR CITIES AND TOWNS – This amendment would explicitly prohibit any city or town’s eligibility for public safety related grant funding from being contingent upon that municipality’s compliance with the MBTA Communities Act. Earlier this year, the Healey Administration changed the rules for the Firefighter Safety Equipment Grant program denying grants to communities that are not in compliance with the zoning law. Representative Kane said tying this type of grant funding to compliance with the MBTA Communities Act is simply unacceptable and jeopardizes public safety. Although the Healey Administration later reversed course, she said placing language in statute will ensure that these protections remain in effect. The amendment was rejected on a vote of 27-128.

MBTA COMMUNITIES ACT ENFORCEMENT DELAY – This amendment would prohibit the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities and the Attorney General’s Office from enforcing any regulation, directive, or requirement under the MBTA Communities Act prior to December 31, 2026. This would give communities at least a temporary reprieve from the harsh penalties being imposed on non-compliant communities, including the loss of critical state grant funding to support critical local projects. The amendment was rejected on a vote of 30-126.

ADVANCED CLEAN CARS REGULATIONS DELAY – This amendment would delay the implementation and enforcement of the Advanced Clean Cars II regulations until no earlier than July 1, 2027. These regulations govern the state’s planned transition to zero emission electric vehicles, and are based on California Low Emissions Vehicle Program. Representative Kane backed this proposal because the state lacks sufficient infrastructure to support these types of vehicles, but the measure was voted down on a voice vote.

COMMISSION TO STUDY OUT-OF-STATE MIGRATION – This amendment establishes a commission to study the factors that impact the decisions of individuals and businesses to relocate to and from the Commonwealth. The commission will study factors contributing to businesses and individuals relocating to and from the commonwealth, such as tax policies; estate tax policies; corporate taxes; costs of living; business operating costs; employment opportunities; and workforce challenges. The commission will develop recommendations to promote economic competitiveness in Massachusetts and to prevent businesses and individuals from leaving the state while also encouraging businesses and individuals to relocate to the Commonwealth. The commission will file a report with its findings and recommendations by July 1, 2026. The amendment was adopted as part of a consolidated amendment on a roll call vote of 154-3.

VOTER ID REQUIREMENTS – This amendment would require voters to present a valid form of identification, such as a driver’s license or passport, when voting to ensure election integrity. It also directs the Secretary of State’s office to develop a program to make a Massachusetts photo identification card available free of charge for voting purposes. The amendment was rejected on a vote of 21-134

The House budget now moves to the Senate for its consideration.

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