

HOUSE No. 64

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts



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KARYN POLITO
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

February 11, 2021

To the Honorable Senate and House of Representatives,

I am filing for your consideration a bill entitled “An Act Financing the Reconstruction of the Soldiers’ Home in Holyoke,” which would provide up to \$400 million in capital authorization for a major project to reconstruct the long-term care facility at the Holyoke Soldiers’ Home.

The current Holyoke Soldiers’ Home was constructed before modern design standards for medical facilities. The Administration has taken immediate steps to address urgent capital and infection control needs, but we believe a major reconstruction of the campus is necessary for the health, safety, and comfort of future generations of veterans and staff.

This bill provides the capital authorization that would allow the Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM) to construct a new long-term care facility on the site of the current Holyoke Soldiers’ Home that, based on federal standards and guidelines, would provide the long term care and adult day health services the veterans of Western Massachusetts and their families deserve and require.

This authorization will enable DCAMM, in partnership with the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS), the Department of Veterans’ Services (DVS), and the Holyoke Soldiers’ Home, to apply on April 15 to the federal Veterans Administration’s State Veterans Home Construction Grant Program for 65% in matching funds for the project.

Beginning with the Rapid Planning Process in September of 2020, DCAMM has engaged a wide range of stakeholders to assess current needs and to seek planning inputs. Their insights have been extremely valuable for the ongoing Schematic Design process. DCAMM, EOHHS, DVS, and the Holyoke Soldiers' Home remain committed to a transparent process and to providing stakeholders and the community with progress reports as they become available. We also appreciate the work being done and the input provided by the legislature's Special Committee on Holyoke Soldiers' Home, and the ongoing guidance and advice we are receiving from Representative Joe Wagner, the Dean of the Western Massachusetts delegation.

Due to the federal calendar, the timeline for the grant program is accelerated, and requires DCAMM, EOHHS, DVS, and the Holyoke Soldiers' Home to quickly move from the study phase into the design development phase, which must be completed by August 1, 2021 to be eligible for this cycle of the grant program. To meet that deadline, DCAMM must have this authorization available by April 1, 2021. We understand this is a very short window and will make ourselves available to the legislature in whatever way would be most helpful, so we can reach an agreement on this bond bill by mid-March, with a terms bill filed and enacted soon afterwards. Missing these deadlines would delay the project until the next grant cycle, meaning our deserving veterans would wait longer for this crucial new facility.

For these reasons, we will do whatever we can to respond to your questions and concerns, and I urge you to enact this legislation promptly.

Respectfully submitted

Charles D. Baker,
Governor

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

In the One Hundred and Ninety-Second General Court
(2021-2022)

An Act financing the reconstruction of the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke.

Whereas, The deferred operation of this act would tend to defeat its purpose, which is to provide forthwith for the immediate capital improvement needs of the commonwealth, therefore it is hereby declared to be an emergency law, necessary for the immediate preservation of the public convenience.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

1 SECTION 1. To provide for a program to protect, repair and improve the capital facilities
2 of the commonwealth and for a program of capital asset acquisitions, dispositions and other
3 improvements for general government operations, the sum set forth in section 2 for the several
4 purposes and subject to the conditions specified in this act are hereby made available, subject to
5 the laws regulating the disbursement of public funds. The sum made available in this act shall be
6 in addition to any other amounts previously appropriated for these purposes.

7 SECTION 2.

8 EXECUTIVE OFFICE FOR ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE

9 Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance

10 4000-2026 For costs associated with planning and studies, dispositions, acquisition of
11 land and buildings and interests therein by purchase, prepayment of lease for a term that exceeds
12 the useful life of the facility, gift or other transfer or by eminent domain pursuant to chapter 79
13 of the General Laws, for the preparation of plans and specifications, repairs, construction,
14 renovations, improvements, modernization, construction, reconstruction, furnishing, equipping,
15 acquiring, remodeling, refurbishing, asset management, accessibility improvements, demolition,
16 disposition and remediation of facilities and grounds operated by the various departments within
17 the executive office of health and human services, all as the commissioner of capital asset
18 management and maintenance, in consultation with the secretary of health and human services
19 and the appropriate commissioners of the departments within the executive office, shall consider
20 appropriate; provided, that \$400,000,000 may be expended for the design and construction of a
21 new facility for the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke to replace the existing Soldiers' Home facility;
22 provided further, that costs payable from this item shall include, but not be limited to, the costs
23 of leases of temporary relocation space or equipment as required for completion of the project;
24 provided further, that costs payable from this item may include facilities for additional Adult
25 Day Health programming on the site; provided further, that any federal reimbursement received
26 by a state agency including, but not limited to, the project related to providing health care,
27 human services and veterans' services in connection with projects funded from this item may be
28 retained by the executive office for administration and finance and expended for the purposes of
29 the project, without further appropriation, in addition to the amounts appropriated in this
30 item..... \$400,000,000

31 SECTION 3. To carry out the purpose of this act, the commissioner of capital asset
32 management and maintenance may, notwithstanding sections 32 to 37, inclusive, of chapter 7C

33 of the General Laws or any other general or special law to the contrary, acquire, by purchase,
34 lease or leaseback for a term, including any extensions, not to exceed 50 years, gift or other
35 transfer, or by eminent domain under chapter 79 of the General Laws, any interests in land and
36 buildings considered necessary by the commissioner to carry out the purposes of this act
37 including, but not limited to, easements for drainage, access, utilities and environmental
38 mitigation, and may grant and retain such easements and interests as considered necessary by the
39 commissioner to carry out the purposes of this act.

40 SECTION 4. To meet the expenditures necessary in carrying out section 2, the state
41 treasurer shall, upon request of the governor, issue and sell bonds of the commonwealth in an
42 amount to be specified by the governor, from time to time, but not exceeding, in the aggregate,
43 \$400,000,000. All such bonds issued by the commonwealth shall be designated on their face,
44 Holyoke Soldiers' Home Capital Improvement Act of 2021, and shall be issued for a maximum
45 term of years, not exceeding 30 years, as recommended by the governor to the general court
46 pursuant to section 3 of Article LXII of the Amendments to the Constitution. The bonds shall be
47 payable not later than June 30, 2056. All interest and payments on account of principal on these
48 obligations shall be payable from the General Fund. Notwithstanding any other provision of this
49 act to the contrary, bonds issued under this section and interest thereon shall be general
50 obligations of the commonwealth.