



# *The Commonwealth of Massachusetts*

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
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To the Members of the Massachusetts House of Representatives:

With this document, the House Committee on Ways and Means presents its recommendations for the Fiscal Year 2024 General Appropriations Act. The Committee's proposal makes fiscally responsible decisions and targeted investments that allow the Massachusetts economy to continue to grow and remain competitive while dealing with the continued aftereffects of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Over the last few years, the Commonwealth has seen large revenue growth in nearly every sector. Those increases largely went towards programs investing in those who have borne the brunt of the COVID-19 pandemic. From housing stability, food security, and early education and care funding, the Commonwealth has attempted to meet the needs of our residents. Now, as revenue growth begins to slow and as the COVID-19 era Federal programs end, we as a Commonwealth need to determine how to continue to meet the needs our residents. This budget aims to do that with historic investments in housing, education, and workforce development all while keeping Massachusetts a competitive economic engine.

In January, the House and Senate Committees on Ways and Means, working closely with the office of Administration and Finance, agreed to a consensus tax revenue number for FY24 in the amount of \$41.4 billion, a 1.6% growth over the revised FY23 projections. Of this total amount, \$33.54 billion is available for the FY24 budget after transfers to the pension fund, MBTA, and other agencies.

The FY24 budget is also the first year that revenue from the Fair Share amendment, approved by voters in November 2022, will be allocated. The Committee created a clear and transparent process on how the money is being spent and where it will be going. This budget makes \$500 million in new investments into both education and transportation needs. These sectors are two of the main drivers of our economy, and the additional infusion of funds into these areas will help propel the Commonwealth forward. Some highlights of how the Fair Share funds will be allocated, include: \$161 million for permanent universal school meals, \$100 million for a Green School Works program, that will help our public schools improve their facilities while providing clean energy sources, and \$250 million for capital needs within the MBTA.

This budget delivers on a shared commitment to the cities and towns across the Commonwealth that we represent. The Committee budget fully funds 3/6th of the goal rate for Chapter 70 to meet the Student Opportunity Act (SOA) obligations. Chapter 70 is funded at its highest level ever at \$6.584 billion, an increase of \$595 million over FY23. This budget also includes additional funding to bring minimum aid up to \$60 per pupil, fully funding charter school reimbursement at 100%, and allocating \$506 million for circuit breaker transportation reimbursement. The budget also funds Unrestricted General Government Aid (UGGA) at \$1.25 billion, an increase of \$19.7 million over FY23, providing additional local aid to support to our cities and towns.

Under the leadership of Speaker Ronald Mariano, one of the House's priorities is to continue to build back our workforce and ensure that Commonwealth comes out of the COVID-19 crisis stronger and more resilient. To ensure an equitable recovery, this FY24 budget focuses on competitiveness and job training, with investments including \$65 million for Adult Education, \$31 million for Youthworks Summer Jobs, \$17 million into the Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund, and \$20.4 million into Career Technical Institutes. These programs, among others, will allow our residents to take advantage of future economic growth in the Commonwealth.

No area has had a greater impact on our workforce than early education and care. The lack of adequate and affordable childcare continues to hamper our recovery. The House remains committed to investing more into early education. As such, this FY24 budget will invest \$100 million into rate increases for early education and care providers, including \$10 million to pay for childcare needs for early educators. This budget also provides \$17.5 million for Head Start grants, \$20 million for childcare and referral agencies, and \$10 million for higher education opportunities for early education and care workers. While a great deal of work needs to be done to address the needs of this sector, these investments are essential to providing immediate improvements into our early education and care system.

In FY23, one of the main funding priorities of the House was housing and homelessness. That budget funded programs like the Rental Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) and Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP) at historically high levels. As we move into FY24, we continue to prioritize these needs and build on previous investments to support homeless individuals, families, and youth. The FY24 budget funds RAFT at \$180.6 million, MRVP at \$173.2 million, \$110.8 million for programs for homeless individuals, and \$102 million for public housing.

Our investments in healthcare are significant. With the end of the federal public health emergency, MassHealth has begun the eligibility redetermination process to review over 800,000 individuals. As a result, the Committee's budget includes \$19.81 billion in spending for the MassHealth caseload, a \$1.9 billion gross decrease from FY23. During the ongoing eligibility redetermination process, the number of those enrolled in MassHealth could fluctuate and is an area that we will be closely monitoring. To help ease the disruptions of the redetermination process, in this budget we establish a 2-year pilot program extending eligibility for ConnectorCare to applicants at or below 500% of the Federal Poverty Limit.

The House remains committed to expanding treatment options and providing resources for those struggling with mental health and substance use disorders. We have focused on prevention, intervention, and long-term recovery. This budget will invest \$208.2 million into the Substance Use Disorder Trust Fund, allowing individuals across the addiction spectrum to access the services they need.

The Committee's budget makes investments in environmental programs, understanding the role they play in protecting public health and in making climate resiliency investments for the Commonwealth. The FY24 budget includes \$102.1 million for state parks and recreation, \$10 million for climate adaptation and preparedness, and \$8.8 million for environmental justice. This funding will help improve and enhance the Commonwealth's air, water, parks, and land.

I would like to thank all members of the House, including the members of the House Committee on Ways and Means, for their input during this unique process. I extend a special thank you to our Vice-Chair, Representative Ann-Margaret Ferrante of Gloucester, and our Assistant Vice-Chair, Representative Patricia Haddad of Somerset, for their advice and assistance in creating this budget proposal.

I look forward to working closely with all the members of the House of Representatives during the upcoming debate. I know that we will work together to produce a fiscally responsible budget that reflects our shared priorities.

Sincerely,



Aaron M. Michlewitz  
Chairman