



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
House of Representatives
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CHAIRMAN
Committee on Ways and Means

April 11, 2012

To the Honorable Members of the Massachusetts House of Representatives:

In this document the House Committee on Ways and Means presents its recommendations for the Fiscal Year 2013 General Appropriation Act. While the Commonwealth is making great strides toward economic recovery, there still are difficult decisions to be made. This proposal reflects our commitment to a thoughtful and responsible approach to fulfilling our obligated spending while attempting to achieve savings.

Speaker DeLeo once again renewed his commitment to the citizens of Massachusetts by declaring there will be no new taxes or increased fees in this proposal. With unemployment rates lagging, we must remain cognizant of the fiscal and economic realities without placing a further burden on taxpayers.

Despite the ongoing challenges presented by the uncertain economy, the Committee recommends making significant investments in Local Aid. Members brought forth concerns about the financial needs of their communities which compelled the committee to make a targeted investment in our municipalities. This budget fully funds the Unrestricted General Government Aid (UGGA) that our cities and towns have come to rely on to balance their annual operating budgets. In addition to UGGA, the committee prioritizes education funding by guaranteeing all municipal, vocational and regional school districts an increase over Fiscal Year 2012 Chapter 70 funding for a total increase of \$164M. We assist districts in meeting their special education obligations by funding circuit breaker at \$221.5M and for the first time, we appropriate funds to offset the expense of the federal mandate (McKinney-Vento) requiring communities to incur the costs of transporting their homeless student population. Furthermore, we were able to prioritize regional school transportation, funding it at \$45.4M.

By way of reform, this budget includes a proposal to place the Commonwealth's community colleges in the best position possible to respond to the changing needs of Massachusetts and its residents, particularly in workforce development and continued higher education. The House proposal includes increased coordination among the 15 separate community colleges and the Board of Higher Education in order to provide flexibility to adapt to new opportunities for the Commonwealth. This is accomplished while still retaining the local involvement in the administration of the schools that has been a critical part of the success of the community colleges.

The proposal before you also acknowledges our commitment to serve elders and the disabled. Programs such as elder nutrition, enhanced home care services and elder protective services were preserved. Recognizing the high cost of out of home services, we increase in-home supports for families of the developmentally disabled and made investments in the areas of transportation and Turning 22. These significant investments ensure there will be a continuum of services to these populations.

Finally, the Committee proposes efficiencies and re-procurements in many areas of state government such as, Mass Health and the Department of Corrections in order to achieve savings and maximize our investments. In addition, we provide the tools needed to seek out fraud, waste and abuse in state funded programs.

I would like to thank the members of the House Committee on Ways and Means for their input and assistance during the development of this budget proposal. I would like to give special thanks to the Vice-Chair of the Committee, Representative Steven Kulik of Worthington, and Assistant Vice-Chair, Representative Martha Walz of Boston for their friendship and efforts during this budget process. I am also grateful to the membership for sharing their budget concerns and ideas with the Committee.

In closing, I look forward to working with each of you during the upcoming debate of the Fiscal Year 2013 budget. I am certain that together we will produce a budget that is a balanced, responsible and addresses the Commonwealth's needs.

Sincerely,



BRIAN S. DEMPSEY
Chairman