



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

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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 2014 General Appropriations Act. In recognition of the economic difficulties facing our Commonwealth and our nation, this budget is a fiscally responsible proposal that includes a 3.88% increase in spending, slightly below the projected consensus revenue number. We achieve this outcome through prudent fiscal practices, allowing us to minimize our draw from the Commonwealth's Stabilization Fund.

In Fiscal Year 2014, the Committee's top priority is higher education. Honoring Speaker Robert A. DeLeo's commitment demonstrated in the 2011 gaming legislation, our proposal targets over \$29M in revenue, associated with the licensing of gaming facilities, to our community colleges and prioritizes the implementation of the Speaker's STEM Academy Initiative. We also increase funding to our state universities and invest in the UMass system to enable them to meet their goal of a 50/50 split, allowing them to freeze tuition and fees. By facilitating this goal, we foster affordability and make a significant commitment to ensure that our students are better equipped to attain a college degree and enter the competitive job market.

Simultaneously, the proposal before you acknowledges our commitment to protecting and assisting our most vulnerable residents. The House proposal provides increased funding to important services within the Department of Developmental Services, such as Family Support Services and the Turning 22 program. We fulfill our obligations by recognizing the costs of the ongoing implementation of Chapter 257. We also ensure that homeless shelters receive sufficient funding to enter into 12 month contracts, providing increased predictability and certainty over previous fiscal years. To protect families in need of shelter, this budget requires that clients be granted presumptive eligibility, so that no family in an emergency situation will be turned away from shelter.

In the area of early education, the House proposal takes a firm stand on reforming the agencies tasked with fostering safe educational environments for our youngest citizens. We establish a special commission to examine the need for greater, affordable, quality early education and care services and to determine methods for addressing the high cost of such services. Our recommendations also address the concerns raised by the Auditor's recent inquiry into the lack of compliance oversight essential to ensuring the health and safety of children in private care. In line with our earlier reforms to increase performance oversight, the House proposal will place a compliance manager in the Department of Early Education and

Care to review oversight procedures and to create efficiencies that ensure vendors are compliant with new and existing regulations.

Continuing our focus on reform, the Committee proposes additional oversight within the Executive Office of Health and Human Services to bolster the waste and abuse prevention reforms we enacted last fiscal year. We establish the Bureau of Program Integrity, which will provide continuous oversight of public assistance programs while maintaining eligibility verification and ensuring we focus our state resources on those residents most in need of our assistance.

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 extend special thanks to our Vice-Chair, Representative Stephen Kulik of Worthington, and our Assistant Vice-Chair, Representative Cheryl Coakley-Rivera of Springfield, for their efforts and assistance during the development process.

I look forward to working closely with all the members of the House of Representatives as we engage in formal debate over the House's proposal. I am confident we will produce a budget that is fiscally responsible while providing critical services to all the citizens of our Commonwealth.

Sincerely,



BRIAN S. DEMPSEY
Chairman