



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

MASSACHUSETTS STATE SENATE
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Committees

Senate Committee on Ways and Means, Chair

Dear Colleagues:

Fiscal year 2014 will represent the fifth full fiscal year since the economic collapse of 2008. It is only over the past year that we have even been able to move away from painful cuts and one-time solutions, and have begun rebuilding vital programs and identifying areas for increased investment.

In last year's budget, we began to transition from cuts to investments in education and human services. For the first time in five years, our FY 2013 budget made progress in implementing Chapter 70 reforms put in place almost a decade ago. The Senate Ways and Means budget also fully funded the Special Education Circuit Breaker program for the first time since FY 2008. We also restore funding to public health, veterans services and mental health programs that have seen demand increase in recent years.

Our FY 2014 recommendations are once again built on the belief that in order to meet the needs of our citizens going forward, we must first fulfill the promises we have made in the past. In the last five years, the Commonwealth has lost ground when it comes to supporting the elderly, providing assistance for childcare and sustainable housing, and meeting our local aid obligations to cities and towns. This budget prioritizes strengthening our commitment to these core government services to regain that lost ground.

Restoring these core services is not just a matter of getting back to where we were before the recession - it is a matter of smart public policy. By eliminating the elder home care waitlist, we will keep more senior citizens safely in their homes, improving quality of life and reducing costly nursing home placements. By investing \$19.6 million in new funds for sustainable housing programs, we will give thousands of families a more secure foundation to raise children and earn a living. Similarly, the \$20 million in new funds we provide for income-eligible childcare will give families the flexibility to work or go to school while their children receive high quality care. Finally, by fully funding Special Education Circuit Breaker and providing additional funds for regional school transportation and charter school reimbursements, we will provide communities with need-driven support that frees up local resources for other municipal priorities.

A focus on new resources for existing programs does not prevent this budget from supporting a number of innovative programs. From municipal incentive grants, to English language learner education programs, to youth violence prevention, we continue to invest in new, data-driven

initiatives that confront some of the most difficult challenges that face our Commonwealth. This budget balances these new investments with a commitment to the core services upon which they build.

Thank you for your tireless work in advocating for the programs that we have prioritized in this budget. Whether in elder care, low-income housing or any number of other issues, your passion and commitment has guided our committee as we develop this budget.

For the committee,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve Brewer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Stephen M. Brewer