



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 2015 General Appropriations Act. In the years following the recession, Massachusetts experienced economic growth and recovery that far outpaced the rest of the nation. Now, as we look forward into Fiscal Year 2015, we must remain mindful of the continued uncertainty at the federal level and more modest economic growth than we have experienced in the past. After reductions in federal funding, we have witnessed firsthand the importance of fiscal prudence and of careful planning across the course of an entire fiscal year.

Through this uncertain economic climate, our careful, deliberate choices have allowed us to maintain important government services for citizens across our Commonwealth. Our budget proposal makes a number of significant investments targeted to support key areas of government, particularly local aid, substance abuse, behavioral and mental health, and higher education. We achieve this by reducing our reliance on one-time resources by over 50%, committing to fund our pension liability four years earlier than previously planned, and making our lowest stabilization draw of \$140M in four years.

Under the leadership of Speaker Robert A. DeLeo, in March the House and Senate adopted a Local Aid Resolution, which includes a \$25.5 million increase to Unrestricted General Government Aid (UGGA) and a \$100 million increase to Chapter 70 funding. This agreement allows municipalities across the Commonwealth to have a clear understanding of the state aid they will receive in Fiscal Year 2015 as they begin to craft their municipal budgets. Additionally, we have made increased investments in Special Education Circuit Breaker, Charter School Reimbursements, as well as municipal libraries.

Due to the overwhelming surge in cases of opiate abuse, we were compelled to develop and enhance policies and programs that provide our first responders with the tools necessary to combat this epidemic. As a first step, we increase the maximum penalty for drug trafficking convictions from 20 years to 30 years, in an effort to deter drug distribution. Then we invest in the expansion of the nasal Narcan first responder and bystander pilot program and provide information technology resources to enhance the prescription monitoring program. Our proposal intensifies services by providing an increased number of beds for the civilly committed under Section 35. We also continue our commitment to protecting victims of domestic violence by allocating funds that target prevention, counseling, and crisis centers.

Continuing Speaker DeLeo's commitment to behavioral and mental health we increased funding for adult community mental health services, moving individuals out of inpatient facilities and into the community. Additionally, we provide for enhanced services to child and adolescent mental health services. Furthermore, we support a significant investment in the Health Policy Commission, allowing the commission to provide assistance and expertise to health care providers seeking to integrate behavioral health care into their patient-centered care delivery model, with the goal of addressing behavioral health issues before they become acute and more costly.

We enhance funding levels for the Massachusetts Rental Voucher program (MRVP), creating 1200 additional vouchers to prevent at-risk families from falling back into Emergency Assistance. Investing in this area will also support congregate bed expansion and assist 170 additional mental health clients for the rental subsidy program. Through all these resources, our Fiscal Year 2015 proposal seeks to provide stability and certainty to our fellow citizens as we build our economy and look to the future.

Finally, the House Ways and Means proposal ensures that the Commonwealth's most vulnerable citizens have access to the vital services upon which they rely. The House proposal provides for meaningful investments within the Department of Developmental Services by maintaining services at sheltered workshops, but also creates a pilot program that will provide an option for families to participate in a community based employment program. Understanding benefits to individuals remaining at home, we increase the Adult Family Supports program to allow for an additional 1,447 clients to remain in their homes. We also maintain funding for autism support services, including the Children's Autism Medicaid Waiver and we increase funding for food pantries, providing one million new meals to those in need.

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 in the upcoming debate over the House's proposal. I am confident we will produce a budget that is both fiscally responsible and effective in providing critical services to all the citizens of our Commonwealth.

Sincerely,



BRIAN S. DEMPSEY
Chairman