



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 2016 General Appropriations Act. The Committee's proposal makes fiscally responsible decisions and targeted investments that allow the Massachusetts economy to continue to emerge from the worst recession of our lifetimes and into a period of consistent and stable growth. This is a budget that funds the commitments of our present and invests in the promise of our future.

Under the leadership of Speaker Robert A. DeLeo this is a budget that contains no new taxes or increased fees. Our budget further demonstrates fiscal discipline by continuing to reduce our reliance on one-time resources, and for the first time since 2007, does not withdraw any resources from the Commonwealth's stabilization fund. This will keep our "Rainy Day" fund balance in excess of \$1 billion, an important factor in maintaining our historically high bond ratings.

This budget delivers on our shared commitment to the cities and towns we represent. It provides a \$34 million increase to Unrestricted General Government Aid (UGGA) and over \$108 million in increased funding for Chapter 70 education aid, including a guaranteed increase of \$25 per pupil for every school district. This is also a budget that recognizes that local aid goes beyond those two accounts, and makes investments to begin to restore reductions in funding for Regional School Transportation and to once again fully fund the state's share of the Special Education Circuit Breaker.

Our budget recognizes the importance of early childhood education and the significant impact that it has on a child's development and future success. Continuing to build on Speaker DeLeo's goals, this budget makes investments to improve quality and access and provides an additional \$5 million to move 833 children off the waitlist and into early education programs. The Committee also proposes over \$18 million to restore funding for Kindergarten Expansion grants.

This budget continues to meet the challenges of the surge in opiate abuse that is impacting all areas of our state. We have focused on prevention, intervention, and long term recovery. We invest an additional \$10 million that will help to ensure that Narcan is readily available to the community, open 150 new support and recovery beds, study the feasibility of a state-wide prescription drug take-back program, and create a pilot program in which medication assisted therapy is introduced in the early stages of treatment.

The Committee's budget proposal preserves existing eligibility criteria for the Emergency Assistance Family Shelter program and looks to address the issue of Homelessness by making targeted investments in programs that have proven results. The Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP) will see its funding increased to historically high levels and create 737 new vouchers that will be utilized to keep at

risk families in their homes and out of the costly shelter program. The budget also boosts the funding for HomeBASE Household Assistance and Housing Education centers and provides \$11.5 million to recapitalize the Housing Preservation and Stabilization Trust Fund.

The House Ways and Means proposal prioritizes vital services and protections to our most vulnerable citizens. It ensures no reduction in Mental Health services and increases the number of community placements. We provide \$12 million dollars in new funding for Autism services and continue to preserve the option within the Department of Developmental Services for families to choose between sheltered workshops and community based employment programs. This budget again ensures that there will be no waitlist for elder home care services, provides for 1.2 million new meals at food pantries, and doubles the funding for witness protection services.

I would like to thank the members of the House Committee on Ways and Means for their input and guidance during the development of this budget. I extend a special thank you to our Vice-Chair, Representative Stephen Kulik of Worthington, and our Assistant Vice-Chair, Representative Benjamin Swan of Springfield for their efforts and assistance in crafting this proposal.

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

Sincerely,



BRIAN S. DEMPSEY
Chairman